

Expression of Interest

Closson Property Farm Market

Submitted by Fisherman's Mark

Dear Mayor Andrew Nowick and Council Members,

Please accept this expression of interest submitted by Fisherman's Mark to develop the farm market portion of the property within the City identified on the tax maps of the City as Block 1002, Lot 41 (the "Site"). The Site is within the Closson Tract Redevelopment Area and is adjacent to North Union Street/New Jersey State Route 29.

As you are certainly aware, since Ian devastated our community in September of 2021, Fisherman's Mark has been renting the Site to continue its service to the community of Lambertville and its residents. As is so often the case, natural disasters of this sort disproportionately impact those who are most vulnerable. The overwhelming support and outreach that Fisherman's Mark received in the wake of Ian is heart-warming. Our donor base was and is keenly aware of the urgent need for our services then and, more than ever, now. Our ability to continue the work we do and to serve the community we do is dependent on us continuing to operate our free MARKET at the "Site".

Fisherman's Mark is willing to purchase the "Site" from the City at a price to be agreed upon. The exact parameters of the Site that Fisherman's Mark will purchase would also be subject to agreement by the parties. At a minimum, Fisherman's Mark would purchase the existing area and building it occupies. Fisherman's Mark would also be willing to purchase the barns on the Site.

Our Development Plan is simple: we will continue to operate our free MARKET as we do now and serve the community. We will continue to offer a no-cost, friendly, store-like environment where individuals can select food and personal items for themselves and their families. Our mobile food pantry will continue deliver to the homebound. We will continue to provide weekend and summer lunches for children and young people in our area. There would be no immediate change to the Site, but the future opportunities the "Site" would provide us with an opportunity to grow the services we provide to our clients.

Board Members

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Thomas White


Jacqui Griffith-Board President

The "Site" would also present future opportunities to provide, by way of example, a community garden, cooking lessons for our community, and partnerships with other organizations that provide similar community outreach programs and services.


The impact that Fisherman's Mark has had on our community and its citizens is unmistakable. Below is a snapshot of the work we have done and will do in the future to allow Lambertville to continue to be a community of all of its citizens working together to forge a bright and welcoming future for all.

Attached you will find supporting documentation which further illustrates the value in Fisherman's Mark staying at the "Site"

We thank you in advance for your consideration.



Jacquie Griffith
Board of Trustees, President



Jennifer Williford
Executive Director

Board Members

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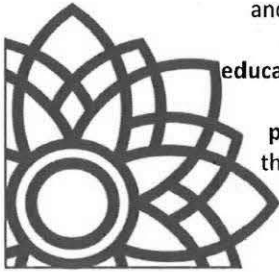
Thomas White

Jacquie Griffith-Board President

OUR MISSION

The mission of Fisherman's Mark is to strengthen our community.

With responsive programs and services that promote stability, health, and education, Fisherman's Mark is an advocate for positive change in the lives of our neighbors and their families.



ABOUT US

Fisherman's Mark is a grass roots 501 (c)(3) social service agency, founded in March 1980 to fill a void in social service networking. Our programs are critical to an area that is largely cut off from other available resources due to location and limited transportation. Central to our mission, we address basic needs while helping clients develop necessary skills to become more self-sufficient. We make a difference in two ways: As there are no other social services agencies in our immediate area, and because individuals and families in crisis are often faced with multiple issues, we have a holistic approach to our client support and do not focus on only one issue or offer only one solution. We also have a two-pronged approach to this support, providing immediate as well as long-term help. The short-term goal is to provide "help when help is needed". For individuals living in poverty (as over 97% of our clients do) crisis is a daily threat, and immediate help, for needs as simple as food on the table, is critical. But we don't stop there. Our long-term goal is to actively partner with clients to address the underlying causes of crisis. Participants create real, sustainable solutions that address their unique barriers to functioning to not only move out of crisis, but to learn the skills to avoid future crisis.

OUR PROGRAMS

- Food Support
- Case Management & Information Resource and Referral

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- Los Puentes
- Lambertville Academy
- Community Outreach
- Volunteer Program

WHO WE SERVE

- Our service area includes ALL of Hunterdon County and a 10-mile radius from Lambertville. Over 50% reside here in Lambertville
- 97% of our program participants live below the poverty level although with the current inflation we now see more ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families. These are families who are unable to afford the basics of housing, food, childcare, transportation and health care.
- We serve the unemployed, underemployed, single moms, those who are disabled, seniors, immigrants and veterans.
- We currently have 1459 adults registered and 559 children

OUR IMPACT

What an expanded market has allowed us to do

- Emergency Free MARKET during Hurricane Ida. Providing cleaning supplies, personal hygiene items, gift cards and resources to ALL those in need
- Expand our Free MARKET operations to meet the growing food support needs
- Provide a location for Meals on Wheels volunteers to do the meal and cooler exchange as well as store coolers for Meals on Wheels
- Increase our summer Farmstand participation to include many more community partners to provide information, resources, and referrals to our program participants
- Cultivated and maintained community garden, allowing our volunteers to have ownership of this garden
- This space has allowed us to be a "food hub" for the underserved of our community

Increase in Market Usage

From 2020 we have seen a measurable increase in our Free MARKET. What we have learned from COVID and Hurricane Ida is how many people live paycheck to paycheck. Now we see many families affected by the rising costs of food, gas, etc. The one area that they can call upon

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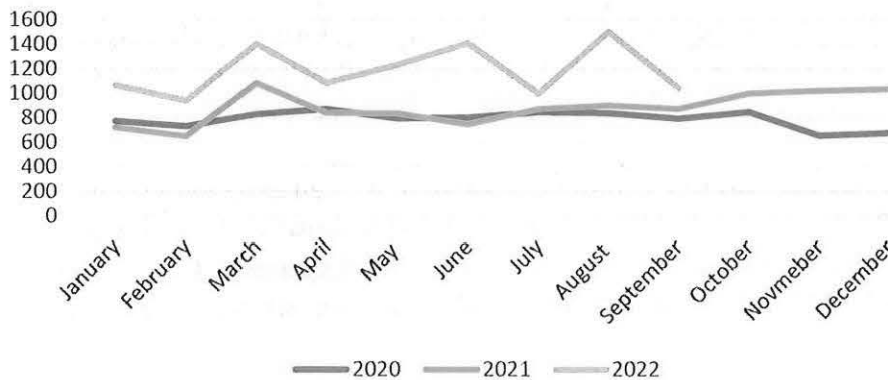
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for help is food. We anticipate these numbers will continue to grow as more ALICE (asset limited, income constrained, employed) families turn to us for assistance.

Fisherman's Mark
Free MARKET
Program Partipants Served



Our New Language

The dignity of our clients is important to us! We have changed our language to ensure that using our programs and services is a positive one. We now refer to the former food pantry as our Free MARKET and our clients are now referred to as program participants. Breaking stigma starts with us!

WHY THIS SPACE?

Finding space to run our Free MARKET operations is very difficult. As our operations have grown, we need space for adequate food storage, commercial freezers, and refrigerators. We also need space that is ADA compliant, has adequate parking and ideally not in a residential area. The Free MARKET needs to be within the town as more than 50% of our program participants do not have transportation. For all these reasons, the space known as the "Site" is more than perfect. The opportunity for us to purchase a permanent location is ideal as you well know the price to lease commercial real estate is cost prohibitive for a small non-profit, not to mention finding space that meets our needs outlined above is VERY difficult.

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OUR POTENTIAL TO EXPAND

FLY (Feeding Local Youth) – Our goal would be to expand upon this program and offer a summer lunch and learn for children Pre-K-8th grade. This would include art, crafts, stories etc. and lunch. Taking any food stigma out of the current lunch program

Garden- We would like to see the garden put to even better use moving forward. Through our community partnerships, we would work with Grow A Row or Rolling Harvest to help plant and harvest produce so that we can offer even more fresh produce in our Free MARKET.

Recipe for Success- With continued access to a commercial kitchen, we can expand upon this program. The kitchen would be used as a job skills training kitchen for those seeking new or expanded culinary skills. This coupled with assisting those who are undocumented, in obtaining their ITIN (Individual Taxpayer Identification Number) will result in an even stronger workforce in our local community.

Delaware Valley Food Pantry- Although we have had initial discussions with some of the board members at DVFP on a potential “joining forces” we certainly are not in a position to say that we see a merger in the near future, however, we would like to offer a partnership in allowing them storage space at our Free MARKET when the need arises. Currently we do partner on things such as delivery costs, food pick up and ordering. We know our assistance is very much appreciated as their model is reliant solely on volunteer support.

As you know, these have been trying times for everyone, but especially for those living paycheck to paycheck. Through Covid, hurricane Ida, and now skyrocketing inflation, Fisherman's Mark has done its very best to fulfill our motto of being the "help when help is needed." As a result, our food support program has proven to be an essential service to our neighbors, one that they have come to rely upon. The impact can be measured with numbers, as in the number of people served, or pounds of food distributed, but the emotional relief we provide can't be represented on a pie chart or spreadsheet. Whether it's the single mother trying to stretch the food budget, the veteran who needs a hand up, or the immigrant family with little means, our primary goal is to help bridge that gap. Our community has always stepped up and generously helped us in our mission, pitching in and keeping us operational and accessible to all who need us. For that, we are forever grateful. It is for all the reasons we have outlined that we respectfully ask our elected representatives of our community to please find a way to keep the Fisherman's Mark Free MARKET at 262 North Main Street operational.

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