

**“The more things for which you develop a fondness the richer the life you live.” – Dan Buettner, Thrive: Finding Happiness the Blue Zones Way**



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## Visiting farmers markets good for the body and soul



**Kate Hampton**  
Guest columnist

Friendly faces. Fresh produce. The smell of fresh cut flowers. Adorable dogs and children walking about. ● The scene at a farmers market is almost a throwback to simpler times, when produce was grown locally and everyone went to the market to pick out what they needed. ● Maybe it's this nostalgia that has led to the growing popularity of farmers markets not only across the country, but in Southwest Florida. ● With National Farmers Market week Aug.4-10, it's the perfect time to re-visit the past and connect with your community in a meaningful way. ● If you've ever stopped into the farmers market at Coconut Point in Estero or the Promenade Shops in Bonita Springs, then you've been to a Blue Zones Project recognized farmers market.

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# Farmers

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Established in 2008, Local Roots, LLC, is the company that runs nine of the largest farmers markets in Lee County. Each of the Local Roots Farmers Markets offers a unique opportunity for vendors to sell seasonal local fruits, vegetables, cheeses, meats, breads, nursery stock and other commodities.

Attendees can buy locally and gather with friends and neighbors in a relaxed outdoor setting. In fact, according to the Farmers Market Coalition, people who shop at farmers markets have 15 to 20 social interactions per visit.

NCH Healthcare System is another organization that offers a produce market for their employees and the community. During high season, usually from October to March from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on rotating Thursdays, you can find the produce market at both the NCH Central Campus and Baker Downtown Campus locations in Collier County.

Farmers markets also increase access to fresh foods. More than \$20 million in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits was spent at farmers markets in 2016.

That means that low-income households and those that are often not able to afford fresh produce, were able to find healthy options. One of the Blue Zones Project food policy initiatives is centered around working with local farmers markets to accept SNAP.

If you've never visited a farmers market before, National Farmers Market week is the perfect opportunity. You never know what great produce you'll find, the friends you might make, or the positive ways your impacting your community.

A list of farmers markets in Collier County:

■ **The City of Marco Island Farmer's Market** — Wednesdays, 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Nov. 20 to April 22: Veteran's Community Park 901 Park Avenue, Mar-

co Island

■ **Third Street Farmer's Market** — Saturday 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Year-round. 1220 Third St. S. Naples

■ **The Vanderbilt Farmers Market** — Saturday 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Year-round. 2355 Vanderbilt Beach Roads

■ **Immokalee State Farmers Market** — Every day 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Year-round - 424 New Market Road E., Immokalee

■ **Community Congregational Farmers Market** — Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. October to April. 15300 U.S. 41 N.

■ **Naples NCH & Blue Zones Farmers Market** — Thursday 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. October to March. Rotates between Central Campus, 2157 Pine Ridge Road and NCH Baker, 311 Ninth Street N.

■ **Naples Italian-American Club Farmers Market** — Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. October to April. 7035 Airport-Pulling Road, Naples

■ **St. Paul's Episcopal Church Farmers Market** — Saturdays, 8 a.m. to Noon mid-November to Mid April. 3807 Davis Blvd., Naples

■ **Golden Gate Community Market** — Friday and Saturday; 2 to 7 p.m. Friday; 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday. Year-round. Golden Gate Community Center 4701 Golden Gate Parkway, Naples

■ **Golden Gate Farmers Market** — Opens Fridays, Oct. 4., through April 2020. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Eagle Lakes Community Park, 11565 U.S. 41 E.

■ **Bed Bath & Beyond Farmers Market** — Saturdays, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., early November through April. 5351 Airport-Pulling Rd, Naples

■ **Pine Ridge Road Farmers Market** — Sundays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. 3370 Pine Ridge Road, Naples

■ **Ave Maria Farmers Market** — Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., November through April. 5076 Annunciation Circle, No. 101, Ave Maria

For a list of farmers markets in Lee County, visit: [eatlocallee.org](http://eatlocallee.org)

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