

Chamber partners with new group for farmers' markets

by BRIAN NADIG

The Edgebrook-Sauganash Chamber of Commerce and the newly formed volunteer group North Branch Market plan to hold biweekly farmers' markets near Edgebrook School this year along with two pop-up markets on Kinzua Avenue near the Metra station.

The markets were going to be canceled for 2023 due to a lack of volunteers, but a new group of volunteers stepped up and ran the markets. The permits were held last year by Everyday Edgebrook, which said it has sponsored about 85 markets in the past 8 years.

The new group of volunteers announced in December that it was planning to separate from Everyday Edgebrook, which is still planning to hold two pop-up markets in 2024.

NORTH BRANCH Market and the chamber recently entered into an agreement to sponsor the markets. In 2024, the permits will be held by the chamber.

North Branch is planning to hold markets every other Saturday from July 6 to Oct. 26 in the Edgebrook School parking lot, where markets have been held for several years. The season is being extended several weeks through the end of October as requested by patrons and vendors, according to North Branch.

Vendor applications are set to open Feb. 1 and close April 1.

In addition, North Branch Market will be hosting two pop-up markets on Kinzua with food trucks and breweries. The North Branch "Summer Kick Off" is scheduled for June 8 in the late afternoon and the North Branch winter market is scheduled for Nov. 16.

EVERYDAY Edgebrook has announced plans to hold a "Summer Solstice" market on Kinzua on June 22 and back-to-school market on Aug. 24.

Everyday Edgebrook president Laura Guenther said last month that the group had not ruled out holding additional markets, including its own series of regular markets over the summer.

Guenther said this week that it is disappointing the chamber did not discuss with or give consideration to Everyday Edgebrook prior to its decision. She said the group has a long history of hosting community events that promote the area business district. She added that the markets were operated for years as a committee of Everyday Edgebrook.

However, the group's board voted this week not to hold biweekly markets.

"We wish the new team the best and thank the community for the past 10 years of supporting Everyday Edgebrook," the group said in a statement.

The volunteers who formed North Branch Market notified Everyday Edgebrook of its decision to separate via an e-mail last month. Some members of North Branch are members of Everyday Edgebrook's board.

North Branch and the chamber representatives said that they hope to expand on the success of last year's markets.

"As we kick off this new year, we are leveraging our 2023 success to engage more neighborhoods, beyond just Edgebrook," said Meghan Dwyer, who is helping lead the new team with nine other volunteers and chamber executive director Kathy Fern.

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"It's been amazing working with this powerhouse group of women and sharing the vision of creating experiences to enhance neighborhood engagement and rebuild the business districts," Fern said. "The chamber recognizes the considerable value of working with such energized volunteers and we see this collaboration as a win-win for the Edgebrook and Sauganash communities, and the greater Northwest Side."

"Through our work for the markets, we realized how much we love creating experiences for our local community. For us, we've realized the idea of 'local' is much more than just the Edgebrook business district on

Devon," Dwyer said.

The North Branch Market team plans to serve Edgebrook, Sauganash, Wildwood and Forest Glen.

"We are proud of creating experiences which shined a vibrant spotlight on our community," said volunteer Jennifer Bassik.

"Our little corner of the city shows up for each other in remarkable ways, and we have fun being together," Bassik said.

"That's invigorated us to make 2024 even bigger and better. With more markets, more vendors, and more neighborhoods benefiting, North Branch locals will love having more shopping, eating, and gathering spaces a little closer to home."