

Nikki Fisher excited to be new farmers market manager

BY ANGELA DENK
adenk@hfchronicle.com

Nikki Fisher loves farmers' markets.

"I have always had a passion for farmers' markets and understanding how much value they bring to communities. They're connectors," she said. "You get to see your neighbors at the market. You get to connect with people and build relationships.

"You're actually speaking to the person who's growing your food, and then you bring it to your home and cook it for your family. You have this, and you know its source. To have that and know you're supporting a small business—you're making a difference in their life, and you're making a difference in your life. The impact is so great."

Fisher officially assumed the role of Homewood Farmers' Market manager in January. She is gearing up now for the opening of the outdoor market on May 28.

Fisher said the process of moving into the manager's role wasn't as simple as just starting work one day. Fisher shadowed her predecessor, Kate Duff (whom Fisher calls "so amazing"), for months to "understand a day in the life" of managing the market.

What does that day-to-day management look like?

"All of the decisions when it comes to the setup, the breakdown and market timeframe come from the village," Fisher said. "For the manager, it's about working with vendors—going out to help recruit new ones, working with them from a compliance standpoint to get them approved, making sure they have insurance and working with the Cook County Department of Health, assuring everyone has the appropriate food handler and sanitation permits.

"It's a lot of back and forth and a lot of paperwork. It also means working very closely with the village to develop marketing strategies and working to get our outreach out there. It's been wonderful working with them, because we're all in alignment on wanting to improve our market not just for the people coming to it, but for the vendors.



Nikki Fisher

"This is the 40th year for the market, and we want to do it big. At this year's market, we're having more activities and more events. More vendors are coming out because they feel more comfortable (than the past two pandemic years). They want to come back and get back to normal things.

"We have a lot of nice events and activities coming for the community at the market. We have a lot of reoccurring vendors and a lot of new vendors and a lot of great partnerships. More vegetarian options. More giveaways. More swag gifts and prizes just for coming. We're not here to just provide great produce. This is so much more than just, 'Hey, I'm going to the store.'"

The final day for this year's indoor market was April 30, and the outdoor Saturday market (held on Martin Avenue just north of Ridge Road in downtown Homewood) will open on May 28. Closing day is set for Oct. 8. Hours will be from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m.

Fisher said the Wednesday evening market will return this year as well, running weekly from July 6 through August, with operating hours between 5 and 9 p.m.

"Attendees will be able to free-range again," Fisher said. "There won't be one specific entry or exit point. We're following CDC guidelines, so masks—at this point—are optional. If something changes, we will continue following those updated guidelines."

Fisher has lived in Homewood for four years. She previously resided in Thornton and says she has had family here her whole life.

"I always wanted to live in Homewood," she said. "I always viewed Homewood as a great, diverse community. It reminds me of Hyde Park. Everything is here—I don't need to go anywhere."

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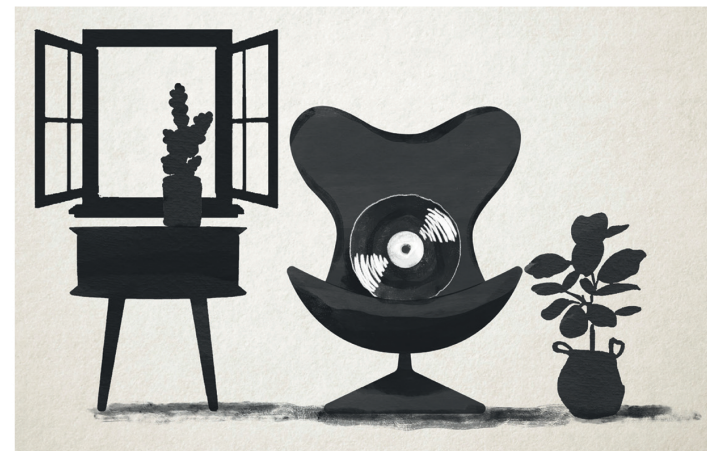
BY CHRONICLE STAFF

Can you spare a morning to help get parks ready for the season? The Homewood-Flossmoor Park District is looking for volunteers for its annual Park Pride event on Saturday, May 7.

Park Pride volunteers work between 8:30 and 11 a.m. and then are treated to a lunch at the Irwin Center.

Doug Boehm, superintendent of parks and planning, is organizing the event and is looking for volunteers to serve as Park Pride captains for many of the parks. Each captain will be given a list of items to be completed that morning.

Community volunteers can contact Boehm by email at dboehm@hfparks.com or call the park district office at 708-957-0300.



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