



* Marketplace * Community * Celebration
Saturday Market Newsletter
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SUPPLEMENTAL NEWSLETTER

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Nickel and Diming

I have heard this phrase now a few times by several Members recently, so I would like to address it openly Market-wide. This is my perspective. Consider this my disclaimer and apology to those who may be offended.

As a “not for profit” organization my goal is simple regarding the bottom line... break even. The Eugene Saturday Market is not in the business to make a profit. Our success is measured by our ability to provide a venue, support and some basic services to our members as they start and grow their businesses as artisans. Our failure can be measured by the Organization being unable to continue operating. It is my goal to make sure this does not happen.

As creatives, I think most of us dreamed of ways to be able to make a living by doing what we love and/or by what inspires and moves us. I know I sure did as I took the financial risk to start my business when I became a member of the Saturday Market, many years ago. I instantly felt supported by the organization and took full advantage of the services included in my membership. For example, I discovered I was dismal in taking product photos, so I scheduled an appointment with a Marketing staff member. He helped me by taking great photos with his digital camera in his lighted photo cube. It made my jewelry sparkle in a good way. He gave me some tips, emailed me my pics, and I still heed his advice today. (I also purchased the little lighted photo cube so I could improve my product photos.) This is a prime example of one of the member services provided in your membership fees. It is not, however, a promise to develop a full marketing plan, strategy and campaign for each member. It is incumbent upon each small business owner (member) to develop and invest in their own marketing/advertising plans for their business. The Saturday Market Organization will provide advertising for the organizations events/seasons and provide some guidance as each Member grows and learns to successfully build their own businesses.

Another such service the Market has provided is credit cards processing services for its members that were unable to process credit cards, for a nominal fee. This fee was to offset the fee that the Market was charged by our Merchant Services for running the cards through the bank. Today, there are so many cheaper alternatives: Square, Venmo, PayPal, Apple Pay, etc., that I am puzzled why Members still prefer Market’s credit card services. It is a service that a handful of members still use in the Park Blocks, but most now use during the Holiday Market. The Organization assumed the cost of the staff that provides this service, but not the fees incurred. As we have grown, staff time is being utilized in a disproportional amount during the Holiday Market versus Saturday Market and is being charged differently for different types of transactions. Credit card fees increased; Discover and AMEX fees are higher than Visa; swiping, tapping, and manual entry are priced differently. Being able to securely process cards wirelessly requires internet service, sim cards, etc. All these things cost money. All these things are different today than they were back with the knuckle busters, carbon paper and landlines. So, it is my desire to provide quality services for each of our members, but I must also examine what, how and how much these services are costing us. The organization cannot operate at a loss. We could not continue our legacy. This is why the credit card processing fee was increased to 6% at the beginning of this season and why we are considering a flat fee transaction fee. (As of today, no real decision has been made regarding a transaction fee; there is only recommendations from the Budget Committee.)

I say a \$.35 flat transaction fee is 3 dimes 1 nickel, so yes, I see the nickel and diming, but in my opinion, the phrase is darker than just my flippant play on words. The phrase is defined “to damage someone or something either by taking away many small amounts of money or by giving too much attention to details.” (Oxford English Dictionary)

Holiday Market 2024 had a 5% increase for the entire Market. Now ALL spaces at the Holiday Market cost the same, regardless of where you are located. In an effort for equitable booth pricing, it was determined that multiple sided booths were at a significant advantage from single sided booths with double and triple the selling space, therefore, a small increase for these premium booths was added. Some members agreed this was appropriate and was something common at other shows. Other members felt it was unfair to those members who “earned” a better space through the years of Market membership. To “earn” your space, it is NOT just the amount of time you have been a member, that is NOT how our point system was designed. The point system is designed to consider multiple factors when assigning points, length of membership is 1 of those factors. Time spent at the Saturday Market on the Park Blocks is another factor. Prior year attendance at Holiday Market is also another factor. The reason the point system was designed in this manner was to discourage “preferential treatment” of one demographic. For instance,

if you have been a member for 30 years but barely attend the Saturday Market and only do December at Holiday Market; you will have less points than a 5-year member who sells 25-30 times during SM and sells all dates at Holiday Market. There is no preference or “favoritism” with the point system. It is designed to reward activity levels, NOT seniority. These were the ideals from which the Market was framed and designed. Looking at the inequity of HM booth spaces through this lens brings clarity to a differentiation between 1 sided (regular) HM booths and 2 or 3 sided (premium) booths. Many members have no problem with this increase and have stated that this is typical in comparison with different shows. I have also discussed the changes with Members who have enjoyed 2 sided booths as Booth Holders of Record for numerous years and have had no issues of “unfair” treatment. However, I am hearing this outcry of unfairness and “nickel and diming” phrase being repeated among some of our long-time members. This is confusing to me, as this system has been the cornerstone of the Saturday Market for decades. I am open to all members who would like to examine these concerns in more depth. Please call, pop by, email, or catch me on Saturday. I am always available or will make myself available to you.

The Eugene Saturday Market is still the BEST and most affordable Market around. Those of you that travel to different markets know this well. Those of you who are Eugene Saturday Market residents, please look around. Down the street we have the Whittaker Market (still re-inventing itself), with a similar Annual fee but a flat per day cost of \$35 for crafters plus all Members must provide their own liability insurance. Portland Saturday Market starts with a non-refundable application fee of \$25 and then is \$85-\$105 fee per Saturday and \$35-\$45 fee per Sunday based on membership levels. Membership levels: guest, probationary member, and member, are more complicated and more expensive. These are just our Market neighbors, other festivals and Markets in Oregon are significantly more expensive. Let's not compare Markets in California...

I would like to discuss a few little know rebates or “savings” we regularly offer to our membership in our pursuit of fairness. In September, we offer a \$20 rebate on Annual membership fees. Many of you have experienced a reduction or full reversal in late fees when establishing a payment plan. There used to be a penalty payment for reserve fee monthly payment plans, we have changed this, so the Reserve Member fees are the same for everyone whether you pay all at once or pay monthly (we do not support gouging low-income members). When I first became a Reserve Member, years ago, I could not afford the initial expense of Annual fee, Reserve membership fee, while incurring huge materials costs just to start in April. I was one of those members that paid monthly until I discovered that I was being charged an additional \$10 for being poor. This was so disheartening and demoralizing to discover this discrepancy, I joined the Budget Committee to affect a positive change. These are not “Nickel and Dime” rebates, these are real changes that bring us closer to our Equity Plan.

No one here is out to damage anyone, rubbing their hands together, cackling wickedly devising to destroy artists through a devilish plot of a malicious increase of credit card fees or equitable booth pricing. In an always evolving dance of budgetary balance, we are trying to just break even. As General Manager, I have a fiduciary responsibility to this organization to examine these details and make changes to best serve our members and sustain our Market.

COVID changed our world significantly. We are still reeling from the effects and will for a long time to come. This pandemic impacted people in so many ways: culturally, politically, financially, socially, and psychologically. Culturally we changed our interactions with different countries and our economic systems were powerfully altered. The Market stayed open, but at half map (due to social distancing mandates) and had to reduce the budget in all areas: marketing, advertising, entertainment, employees, health care and more. Politically, there was a significant shift (not going to comment more at this time). Financial trends shifted significantly, and disposable income was no longer available, as it became clear many people's /families concern turned to survival. Socially, we were mandated to isolate and spatially distance ourselves from others, closing many businesses, restaurants, malls, schools and churches. The psychological damage is presenting itself in increased anxiety among the populace and continued fear and isolation. (My husband was sent home to work and never went back. I now force him to put on “real” pants and pry him out of the house at least once a week because he has gotten weird.)

It should be noted and celebrated that due to the diligence and careful planning of the Board of Directors and the Budget Committee, the Eugene Saturday Market was able to weather the Pandemic storm without having to close and provided continuous service and venue to its members and the Community. This is not the case with other Markets (ie; Portland was forced to close its doors during COVID).

As a Member of this Member led organization, I looked at our staff with a sense of responsibility. I saw them as “my staff” in the sense that I should always look towards taking care of them, with respect and gratitude. During the pandemic, I worried about the staff as they were subject to budget cuts, no benefits and an unsecure future.

As General Manager I have a deeper sense of responsibility to both staff and our members. I hope that I will earn your respect and gratitude.

- Shannon Lee-Hutson