

## BULLER SPENDS A LIFETIME AT FARMER'S MARKET BOOTH.

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Photo by Jody Isaackson Linda Buller of rural Hendricks fills a vegetable order for a customer Saturday morning. Her vendor booth can be seen in Marshall, Ivanhoe and Hendricks throughout the summer and has been in Marshall for 38 years.

**MARSHALL** — It wouldn't be a farmers market in Marshall, Hendricks or Ivanhoe without Linda Buller's booth.

Buller's Gardens of rural Hendricks has been the mainstay of three farmers markets for years.

Even during a slow time at 9 a.m. Saturday, customers milled about her booth demanding her fresh produce, asking questions on transplanting bulbs and asking for various vegetables they didn't see on display.

*"I started doing farmers markets in 1979 in Marshall, in Hendricks in the 1980s," she said. "That's 38 years, I believe."*

Buller has been with the Marshall Farmers Market the longest of all the vendors.

She began managing the Hendricks and Ivanhoe farmers markets about 15 years ago when the horticulture society bowed out.

When she and her husband were first married, the farm crops weren't doing well. Buller said that starting a garden was a necessity. Her mother-in-law even came over to help weed the garden.

*"We grow all our own bedding plants so we start in February," she said. "It's been such a cold, weird spring. We planted onions April 8. They were under snow for a awhile. We had only two days to plant 12,000 sets."*

*"People depend on my produce during the summer," Buller said.*

Many former gardeners have let their gardening go, she said.

*"Now people depend on us for their fresh produce, especially in Ivanhoe and Hendricks, that we can't get out (of the business)," she said.*

Buller said the Marshall Farmers Market averages 35 to 40 vendors. It is in a new location this year, between Schwan's headquarters and the YMCA, but the customers have followed them.

*"We kind of outgrew the other place, for parking and for vendor space," Buller said. She added that the vendors probably get even more business because with the YMCA behind them, they can catch health-conscious customers as they leave the workout facility.*

Buller said she is happy to support the SNAP/EBT token program, too.

*"I have no complaints," she said. "People get the fresh produce they need, and the state has matching books for them. They can even use their debit cards at the SNAP/EBT booth to get the tokens to give to participating vendors."*

After telling yet another customer that she was sorry that the cucumbers went fast today, Buller also filled an order for the last of her unshelled peas.

Buller then said her favorite reason for staying with the vendor booth so long was the people.

*"I get a lot of the same customers every year," she said. "They tell me, 'Welcome back.' It's the human camaraderie. On the farm, there's just the two dogs for company. Although, people do come out to the farm, too, to buy things, but I ask that they call first.*

*"People in Marshall have been good to me," Buller said. "I have a lot of regulars here."*

Someone in Minneota had called her to come there, too, but three farmers markets seemed to be just about enough.

*"I think we've got all we can handle," Buller said. "The vegetables need time to grow, and we need time to pick them."*