

Homegrown talent

Musical acts at this year's farmers market offer local flavor

By [Flynn Murphy](#)
staff writer

Fresh fruit, ripe produce and live, outdoor music are the trademarks of the Downers Grove farmer's market. Some local musicians say that family atmosphere and a sense of community are just as important to the market's lasting appeal.

"We first started playing at the market back when it was practically four farmers sitting on a bench," said Julie Hecksel of the music group Patchouli. Comprised of longtime Medinah residents, the group has been performing in Downers Grove since 2000.

"Now we're starting to recognize a lot of the kids and families that come out to see us play," Hecksel said. "It's been so much fun to see the same faces enjoying our music year after year."

The addition of live music has always been a draw for the market, according to market officials. But this year, the Indian Boundary YMCA officials who administer the market decided to include more local performers.

"We're very excited about the performers who are lined up for the season," said Judy Ellertson, a farmer's market coordinator. "It's just something extra that we believe enhances the atmosphere for our Saturday-morning shoppers."

Hecksel said the Saturday morning performances are different than typical nighttime shows.

"We're part of the atmosphere," Hecksel said. "It's not a listening experience where everything is focused on the performers. It's a much more laid-back experience."

The performers lined up for the season are playing for free, but don't think that means they are small-time acts, Ellertson said. Many of the groups have earned local and national accolades. Some have fan bases that stretch across the country.

Here is a list of performers: • **July 8 - Eric and Beth Carlson:** The duo plays folk music seasoned with a rich blend of harmonies and a dash of bluegrass. They have performed throughout the Downers Grove area and the Midwest. Professional performers since 1994, they have a Celtic style. The Carlsons accent their music with 6- and 12-string guitars, a bodhran, banjo and recorder.

• **July 15 - Tastes Like Chicken:** Chicago residents Bob Longmire and Marie Bertolotta play a mix of swing tunes, blues standards, golden oldies and country songs. Longmire is an accomplished guitar and harmonica player who has played in the Chicago area since the 1960s. Bertolotta has been singing for more than 15 years.

• **July 22 - Trillium:** This Celtic group is the side project of a few Downers Grove residents. Mim Eichmann, Downers Grove resident and artistic director of the Midwest Ballet Theater, plays the Celtic hammered dulcimer. Bass player Doug Lofstrom is a Downers Grove resident and professor of music at Columbia College Chicago. The group also features local residents Ed Hall and Paul Russell on the guitar and fiddle.

• **July 29 - Improm-II:** The acoustic folk duo features Dennis Ostrowski, the music coordinator for the Downers Grove farmer's market. Ostrowski plays guitar and bandmate Ken Grossinger plays stand-up bass fiddle. The two have played throughout the Chicago metropolitan area for many years.

• **Aug. 5 - Jay Mathes:** A graduate of Columbia College and a Wheaton resident, Jay Mathes is a jazz guitarist. He recently recorded his first album.



Robyn Sheldon / Special to The Sun
From left, Pam Brandt of Woodridge listens as her daughter, Allison, 6, son, Andrew, 2 and other children play along with the music of local performers Patchouli during the Downers Grove Farmers Market on July 1. The other junior musicians are, from left, with her back to the camera, Keya Jain, 3, of Downers Grove, her brother Kunal, 2, and Max Abrahamson, 6, of LaGrange.