

## *The Anne Arundel County Farmers' Market Origins*



The Anne Arundel County Farmers' Market (AACFM) was first organized in 1981 by the County Office of Planning and Zoning. The Market was sponsored by the Anne Arundel County Farm Preservation Board, Farm Bureau, Co-operative Extension Service, and the Department of Agriculture. The Market opened its first season in the Board of Education parking lot on Riva Road on Saturday June 27, 1981. There was no building and only a handful of vendors. The season was very short with summer produce only.

The AACFM remained at the Board of Education parking lot site for two more summers. In 1984 the first building to house AACFM was dedicated by the then County Executive, O. James Leightheizer. Over the years, the number of vendors grew to over 15, the season lengthened, and the variety of items offered for sale, also, grew.

In 1992 the second building was dedicated by County Executive, Robert R. Neal and AACFM was privatized and incorporated. AACFM is now an Agricultural Service Corporation running the market for its membership.

The AACFM at the Riva site, now, has over 50 vendor members. It is open two days a week in the summer. A large variety of items are now being offered and it is the longest season in the state, opening in April and continuing until the Saturday before Christmas.

In 1994, AACFM dedicated both buildings to the memory of Michael R. Cirino, The County officer who helped in the starting of our Market and was the first Market Manager. AACFM participated in the state WIC program, to provide fresh fruit and vegetables to women, infants and children. In 2004 the federal and state governments passed the senior SEMNP program to help elderly eat fresh produce by redeeming coupons at the farmers markets.

The last five years have been spent to making our Market more convenient, comfortable and a safer place for our loyal customers. From 2006 to the present, we have connected the two pavilions to keep out inclement weather. A year later, the building was wired and a generator was installed to light to light the building in the winter early morning and make it possible to hold evening events. In 2009 and 2010, with the help of AAEDC wind breakers and shade screens were installed to make everyone's shopping experience the best it could be. Since 2006 AACFM runs monthly television programs and has a web page to provide our customers with information about the Market. These additions were made possible by the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission, television broadcasting stations and the many volunteers that help in the operation of this market.

Many things have changed over 30 years since the first market season on the Board of Education parking lot. One thing has never changed is our desire to bring ALL customers the freshest and best that Anne Arundel has to offer. We do this with great pride!