



500 Gather on Plaza to Enjoy Farmers Market, Barbecue Lunch

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(June 8, 2001) Almost 500 employees soaked up the sun – and a little barbecue sauce – during Metro Café's first Farmers Market and barbecue picnic on the Plaza, Thursday.

The event was such a success, says cafeteria manager Bruce Ueno, he's tentatively planning another in mid-July. Counting those who ate barbecue and those who ate in the cafeteria, his crew served about 1,900 customers – some 400 more than are served on a normal Thursday.

Although the day had started out overcast, by noon the Plaza was warm and sunny. Smoke from the outdoor grill curled around the busy chefs who tended the chicken, ribs, burgers, roast corn and hot dogs and waited on hungry customers.

Some stood in line for 30 minutes or more to get their lunches, but found the wait was worth it. They could smell the barbecue cooking and they were entertained by the music of Transit Security Manager Dennis Flowers.

Conversation was limited

Once the diners sat down to eat, conversation was limited. But, remarks by the few diners who didn't have a mouthful included..."The potato salad is really good..."The ribs are nice and tender..."It's good, the ribs, baked beans, cole slaw and potato salad..."

Nearby, employees picked through the Farmers Market selection of fresh fruits, vegetables and cut flowers. Prices, they found, were reasonable.

"I bought some wonderful fresh fruit – grapes, oranges, strawberries – so I can make a great tropical fruit salad when I get home," said Benita Horne of HR



Jody Feerst checks out the fresh fruit at the Farmers Market.



There wasn't much room for conversation as employees turned their attention to the barbecue lunch.



Phyllis Meng pays for her Farmers Market selections.

Development & Training. "Only \$6 and I'll have fruit for a whole week."

Ueno says he'll make some changes for the next Farmers Market and barbecue, including arranging food service so customers needn't wait so long. He also will set up the produce display more efficiently and have a separate cashier so customers can move through more quickly.

"We had some glitches this time – including two workers who called in sick and a backup cash register that broke down," Ueno said. "It was Murphy's Law at work, but our goal is to improve each time we do this."

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Employees took time to look over the selection of fresh fruits and vegetables.



Cafeteria workers kept the barbecue grills hot and smoking as they turned out delicious meals.

PHOTOS BY BILL HEARD