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Community markets ripe pick for farms

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By **Daniele Cruz**
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ELK TWP. -- U.S. Sen. Jon Corzine stood by the roadside market at William Schober & Sons farm on Friday, indulging in homemade ice cream and fresh peach pudding while he spoke with owner John Hurff about issues South Jersey farmers are confronted with today.

Corzine, who grew up on a farm in Illinois, sympathized with growers who are struggling to market their produce to in-state consumers.

"New Jersey gets less than half a percent of the total agricultural expenditures of the federal government," he said.

The New Jersey Farm Bureau arranged for Sen. Corzine to visit the local farm to recognize growers who sell their produce directly through community farm markets.

Dating from the early 1900s, the 250-acre Schober farm raises 200 acres of peaches, apples and nectarines.

John Hurff, fourth-generation owner of the farm, is using his ingenuity to sell about half the fruit he grows at outdoor community retail markets like the one held near the old train station in Woodbury on Saturday mornings.

Last year, Hurff began selling at the farmers' markets in both Woodbury and Collingswood. Pleased to have found a profitable direct retail outlet for his produce, this year he added markets in West Cape May and Salem.

Community farmers' markets sprouting up throughout the state are lauded by

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state officials as win-win programs for both the local public and the growers. Buyers get the freshest produce at direct-market prices, while farmers get to meet their buyers and save on distribution costs.

Hurff said the community markets in Collingswood and Woodbury are becoming quite popular.

Virginia Horn, chair of the Woodbury Farmers' Market Committee, said a number of repeat customers are beginning to frequent the market.

The Woodbury Farmers' Market is open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. each Saturday in the lot adjacent to Cooper Express cafe on Cooper Street.

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