



## Ah, That Warm Community Feeling

Until I came to Bloomington, I never really had a relationship with a grocery store before. But I do with Bloomingfoods. Its west-side location is near the *Bloom* office and I'm in and out of there every day, sometimes several times.

I know employees and lots of the regulars who shop or eat there or just stop in for a cup of coffee or tea. It's a community place. I know people from the east side, downtown, and Elm Heights who feel the same about their Bloomingfoods.

While eating tuna salad there the other day, I got to thinking about all the places and events that make our community so special.

The Lotus Festival, for sure. That's coming up soon and as much as I love the music in the tents, I love the feeling on the street even more. There is such a sense of joyfulness; it's as though we are a community of carefree, innocent children — and we're all being allowed to stay up late.

There's also a wonderful vibe on the Gallery Walk Friday nights when you can stroll from one art gallery to the next, sip a glass of free wine, have a free nibble, bump into friends, talk a lot, move on, have another glass of free wine, another free nibble, talk some more, admire, and maybe even buy something beautiful. Nice way to start the weekend.

All of our arts events — Arts Fair on the Square, the Fourth Street Festival of the Arts & Crafts, and the Local Artists Showcase — are similar good times that contribute considerably to that warm feeling of community.

Theater, too, is a shared experience, where we gather to not only enjoy but to revel in the accomplishments of our talented fellow citizens. I feel, for lack of a better word, miserable for anyone who loves theater and missed seeing Cardinal

Stage's glorious production of *Les Misérables*. I saw the original show on Broadway. Cardinal's was better.

What else?

The Taste of Bloomington. You get to see your neighbors, friends, and co-workers with their mouths full. And they get to see you the same way.

The Bloomington Community Farmers' Market. What fun! Even if you don't like vegetables, it feels virtuous to buy them directly from farmers and carry the bag around.

The Limestone Comedy Festival. A definite comer. I predict it will someday be bigger than the Lotus Festival. (See, you are laughing already.)

The City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation Performing Arts Series. Eating a picnic dinner in the park surrounded by your neighbors, their children, and dogs while enjoying great entertainment is so much more fun than eating dinner on a tiny folding table at home watching depressing TV news or *Seinfeld* reruns. Please note my personal favorite, Krista Detor, is performing at Bryan Park at 6:30 p.m., August 31. If you see me, stop by and say, "Hey!"

The Canopy of Lights. The first time I attended this local tradition I felt like an extra in a Disney movie. When 5,000 people turn out on a freezing night to watch strings of light bulbs get switched on, you know they are really there just to be together at holiday time and to keep one another warm.

And that, I believe, is the true meaning of community.

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