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## Chiefland Farmers Flea Market thrives in its 20th summer



**Sonny Griffeth, 69, stands in front of some of the many, many different mower blades available at the Chiefland Farmers Flea Market. Griffeth has a long career involved with tools and has owned the flea market for 20 years – as of next month.**

### Story and Photos

**By Jeff M. Hardison © July 20, 2019 at 1:49 p.m.**

**CHIEFLAND** – The Chiefland Farmers Flea Market is thriving this summer, 20 years after being renamed when a new owner took it over.

Once known as McCormack’s Flea Market, the 12-acre site located at 1206 N. Young Blvd. (U.S. Highway 19) became the Chiefland Farmers Flea Market in August of 1999, when Sonny Griffeth bought it from Jack McCormack.

“Jack needed to sell the flea market,” Griffeth said during an interview Friday (July 19) with *HardisonInk.com*. “He told me that I could buy it for just a little bit more than I was paying him for rent.”

Sonny Griffeth owns Griffeth Tools, and he was a tool vendor in McCormack’s Flea Market. Griffeth had been doing business there. Griffeth Tools was established in 1994 – 25 years ago.

The Chiefland Farmers Flea Market today is about 30,000 square feet under roof on approximately 12 acres with about 70 different vendors – not counting the outdoor dealers.

There are four long rows under roof, going essentially east and west and two north-south rows of vendors under the roof of the Chiefland Farmers Flea Market. Outside on the north end, there are scores of dealers as well.

“It seems like yesterday,” Griffeth said in regard to his initiation into being a flea market

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owner, at a place where he had been a tool vendor for the five years before.

As for this summer, things are looking good at the flea market in Chiefland.

“Business is unusually good for this time of year,” Griffeth said on Friday.

He attributes some of the increased traffic to the recent establishment of Southern Leisure RV Resort and the smaller Strawberry Fields for RVers Resort in Chiefland. Advertising with *HardisonInk.com* brings results for all advertisers, by the way.

He has watched the market in which he has been involved.

“Flea markets traditionally have grown on the outskirts of cities,” Griffeth said, “and as the cities grow out to them, the flea markets become sites for condominiums. Most of the bigger flea markets of South Florida are condos now.”

People are buying more things through the Internet and having them delivered to their homes or at the Post Office, Griffeth added. Still, there is that special something that defies description in regard to shopping at flea markets.

There are many things that can't be bought on the World Wide Web, and there are experiences that can occur only at the flea market when speaking as one human being to another.

“Here, you are dealing with 70 different and unique people,” Griffeth said. “That's 70 different personalities that you can like.”

The face-to-face selling and buying at flea markets is not only an economically sound venture, but it can be a happy, friendly social experience as well. And to some degree, there is even a flea market culture or a flea market state of mind.

Would the 69-year-old flea market owner tell a 49-year-old man to buy a flea market today, like he did 20 years ago?

“If you're not scared of work,” Griffeth said, “and if you're a self-starter, then I would say ‘Buy that flea market.’”

Beyond being dedicated to working and having some level of natural talent to see what needs to be done without being told to do it, Griffeth said there is one essential element to succeed. Be nice to people.

“Treat 'em right,” he said. “We're all human beings.”

On Fridays, the market usually is not as fast-paced and heavily-trafficked as on Saturdays and Sundays.

Lydia Griffeth, Sonny's wife and manager of the flea market, has mentioned to him the idea of closing on Fridays, he said. Sonny Griffeth is not going to do that, though, because people like to have the option for visiting on Fridays as well as Saturdays and Sundays, he said. And some Fridays provide for banner business days too.

The flea market is open year-round every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

On Friday (July 19), Griffeth was asked if there is any particular vendor who is new to the market and whom he might want people to know about.

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Seen here are (from left) James Lynch, owner of Healthy Phone Tech, Sonny Griffeth, owner of the Chiefland Farmers Flea Market, and Codie Cowan, a tech at Healthy Phone Tech.

James Lynch, 21, of Chiefland owns Healthy Phone Tech. His store is one of the air-conditioned units inside, by the way. And he apparently is not afraid to work as well as being a self-starter.

Healthy Phone Tech has been at the Chiefland Farmers Flea Market for about seven months now.

This phone repair service offers to fix cracked screens, correct charging issues, replace batteries, repair tablets and iPads and repair the hardware parts of computers.

This is a place to visit to discover even more options that may be helpful to a telephone user.

“We don’t fix software issues,” Lynch said.

Since opening at the flea market, Lynch said he likes the crowds. He sees a diverse customer base passing through the market.

While Lynch is among the newest business owners at the flea market, one couple who are working in the Griffeth Tools cornerstone of the flea market is Jesse and Carla Russ.

Jesse, 42, and Carla, 41, have been selling things at the flea market since 2005.

Carla Russ said “We have



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been Sonny's tool people since 2009."

With 14 total years at the flea market and 10 years as "Sonny's tool people," Carla and Jesse Russ are happy with their choice.

"We're still here," Carla Russ said. "This is life. This is us. We get to meet new and exciting people each weekend. It's never boring. We get to hear stories from people past; when they were in the service and what they're doing now."

The history of the growth at the flea market includes some high points.

In April of 2000, the outdoor flea market part of the current scene started. Today there is a red brick path next to the northern part of the covered flea market area. There are 50 booths in this outside area, which adds to the 70 vendors.

Dealers seem to like it and the public loves it. The outside was expanded in Oct, 2011. There are many booth sites available inside as well.

The current 12 acres started when Griffeth bought the 10 acres from McCormack. Then on Feb. 11, 2002, Griffeth bought the 1.7 acres fronting U.S. 19. It added visibility and parking.

On March 12, 2002, the flea market received a permit from the City of Chiefland to erect a new sign on the then-new property.

In April of 2004, the flea market opened a 21-site RV park, adjacent to the market.

The Chiefland Farmers Flea Market has been going strong for many years thanks to vendors and patrons from near and far.

There are often special events, like car shows, pet adoptions, safety shows and the potential exists in the near future for the LifeSouth Community Blood Services bloodmobile to accept donations there.

While each visit to the Chiefland Farmers Flea Market is bound to provide some similar experiences, each trip is just as likely to provide guests with new opportunities to buy items or accept services that may previously have been unknown prior to that particular visit.

And now only is this flea market wheelchair friendly, but it offers a fine place for people to stroll and clock some steps if they are inclined to do that. The stories that people can find at the Chiefland Farmers Flea Market are bountiful.