



Gray skies and a soft but persistent rain put hearty shoppers and sellers to the test Saturday, but the Lincoln Farmer's Market held strong just long enough to see the mid-morning sun poke through the clouds.

About 400 people weathered the weather, with or without umbrellas, and browsed through the open-air market reminiscent of the old Market Square of the late 1800s, according to Sally Oglesby, assistant program consultant for the Lincoln Haymarket Development Corp.

Located in the Historic Haymarket District, the Farmer's Market bustles every Saturday morning with local farmers, gardeners, jelly makers, bakers, artisans and other street vendors who line Seventh Street between P and Q streets.

Fresh fish has replaced noisy livestock, but shoppers still find farm-fresh produce and home-baked breads and pastries from old family recipes. In the spirit of the market, sellers bring only homegrown or homemade products.

Now in its fifth season, the market attracts about 30 vendors and nearly 700 shoppers each week.

Gary Barcus of North Bend started truck-farming with a buddy part time four years ago between semesters at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. They now grow produce full time, as long as the seasons and the markets cooperate, he said.

The abundance of delights available at the market from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. include: seasonal products such as bedding plants and sweet corn; fresh and dried herbs, fresh-cut and

dried flowers, and native flowering plants and houseplants; vinegars and honey; jams, jellies and preserves; produce such as sweet potatoes, broccoli, squash, tomatoes, beets and cabbage; fresh eggs; woodchip mulch; fall harvest specialties like corn shocks; and tie-dyed T-shirts and homemade craft items.

Vendor Stephanie Whitson of Douglas brings her four children to the market as part of their home-schooling experience.

"It teaches the children to interact with people and is really good hands-on math training and small business training," Whitson said.

Seven-year-old Zachary helps his father Bob with woodworking and 10-year-old Brooke makes her own crafts, helps her mother sew and is learning to balance the business books.

Balancing the checkbook or figuring the business costs and profits sends Brooke's interest in math up "about 3000 percent," Whitson said. The children also learn percentages as they calculate their own small share of the family's profits, she said.

The Market also features walking tours of the historic district, children's dancing and demonstrations of traditional crafts and trades such as fencing matches; cheese, wine and jelly making; quilting; landscaping with native grasses; and spinning natural fibers on old-fashioned spinning wheels.

This Saturday, accordionist C.J. Hanner will be seen strolling among the crowd, and the Lincoln Calligraphers Guild will be demonstrating their craft.



Story and Photos By Robin Trimarchi