



Kay Ruzicka, under umbrella, grows vegetables 70 miles north of Lincoln near Rogers. Ruzicka says she has brought her produce to the market for eight years.



Alicia Perez, from Sioux City, Iowa, cradles Diablo, a 2-year-old Chihuahua. Diablo, weighing in at 1 1/2 pounds, won the smallest dog competition at a dog show last weekend.

Shoppers reap profits of market

By Shane Tucker
Staff Reporter

Onions, zucchini, hand-woven rugs and live entertainment may not be typical inner-city fare. But Lincoln's Haymarket district isn't a typical inner city.

Together, the produce and province combine to form Lincoln's only public market, the Farmers' Market. Market manager Billene Nemec said the old-fashioned market was enjoying its ninth year of increasing popularity in Lincoln's historic Haymarket district.

The open-air market, located at the corner of Seventh and P streets, is open from mid-May to mid-October

from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Nemec said the market began as a project to help revitalize the Haymarket district. The Historic Haymarket Board sponsors the market, which was originally designed as a tourist attraction.

Today, the market functions not as a sideshow but as a feature attraction, market coordinator Sally Oglesby said. "We're fulfilling a need," she said. "It definitely benefits the Haymarket, but the city really uses it."

In fact, Oglesby said, the city uses it to the tune of \$2 million to \$3 million a year, thanks to the market's many faithful customers. Last week the market had one of its better days

with almost 8,000 customers, she said.

Oglesby said part of the market's appeal was the personal relationship between customers and vendors.

Dorothy Conrad agreed. Conrad, a three-year veteran of the market, sells homemade bread, jellies and quilts.

"I started selling at the market because of the farming crisis, but I've continued because of the people," Conrad said.

The market's vendors, coming from a 100-mile radius, sell home-grown fruits, vegetables, flowers and an assortment of handmade wares. For the vendors, Oglesby said, it's more than

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—Conrad
Farmers' Market vendor

a hobby; it's a small business.

"They have acres grown just to bring here. This is their livelihood," Oglesby said.

The vendors pay a stall fee to sell their wares — \$150 before Jan. 31, \$230 after that, and \$12 a week during

the season. These fees are used to pay for advertising and entertainment.

The entertainment at the market is as diverse as the products sold. An assortment of jazz, blues, juggling and clog dancing serve to amuse customers as they browse through the various booths.



Mary Fenton of Lincoln said she was going away for the weekend and didn't want to arrive empty handed. Fresh-baked goodies were her solution.



Sellers and buyers of fresh vegetables, baked goods, and handicrafts gather each Saturday morning in front of the train station at Seventh and Q Streets

Photos by William Lauer