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## Introduction to Farmers' Markets & Events

Market is a place for exchange of money and a place to find meaning in public space (Francis & Griffith, 2011). The Larimer County Farmers' Market is managed and run by the Larimer County CSU Extension staff and Master Gardeners. All vendors are local (2023). The market is more than food. I helped plan five special events (two in the future) that were educational and garden-related for children and others walking through the market. They were Pride at the Market, Picnic at the Market, National Farmers' Market Week, Fall Festival, and the eCritic Carnival.

Planning took preparation, work, community participation, a mission, interdisciplinary work, experts, communication, feedback—including incentives— and flexibility at every stage (Wates, 2008).

Friendship bracelets were part of the pride market because we can all be friends. I incorporated social dance at the "picnic" to give people the chance to dance. Dance improves wellbeing, mobility, and mental health for all (Olsson & Heikkinen, 2019; Hackney & Earhart, 2010). I included bingo for National Farmers' Market Week so market goers could experience more aspects of the market.

## My Goals

The goals of the collaboration were numerous:

1. Plan and implement five events during the market season.
2. Learn how to plan educational events geared toward children.
3. Understand the business operations of a farmers' market by attending the market and helping with logistics and accounting.

## With Ecosystem Science & Sustainability

Although sustainability can be discussed and incorporated into the market, sustainability is long term and the Larimer County Farmers' Market operates one day a week and with less personal commitment toward sustainability. At the same time, people come from around the community to support local farming and fresh foods in the center of the community; it is the epitome of sustainability. I used the space to include people in waste, irrigation, social justice, and farming education.

## What We Did

With this position, I helped to plan educational events with the team, encourage recycling, prevent waste at events involving paper, and create shopping lists and a bingo board for the markets.

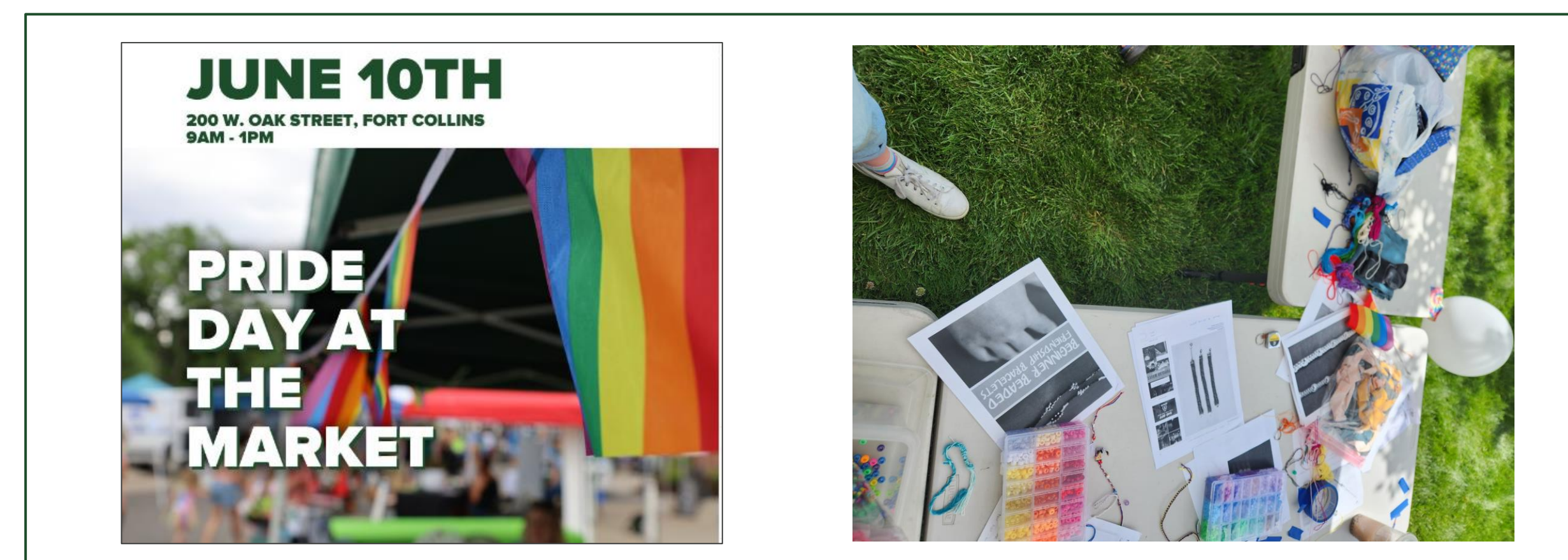


Fig. 1. Pride at the Market. We hosted coloring, friendship bracelet making, and a photo frame. Seen on the right are bracelet making materials.

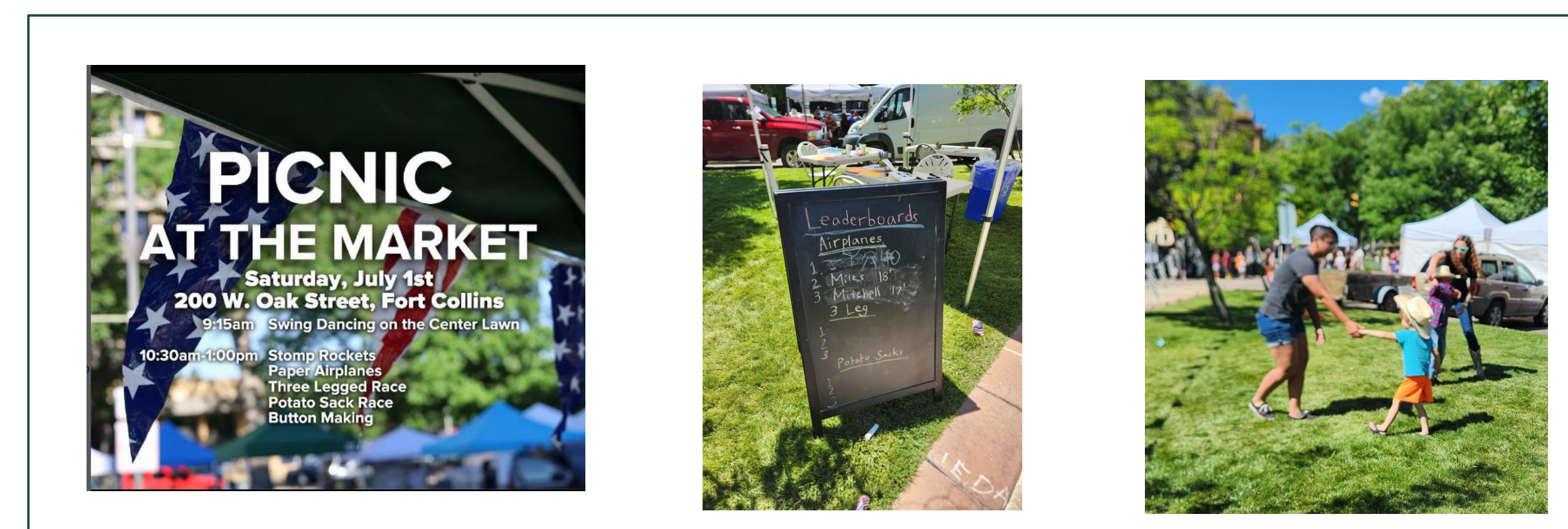


Fig. 2. Picnic at the Market. We planned paper airplane races, yard games, and swing dancing. Shown are the paper airplane leaderboard and a boy learning how to partner dance.



Fig. 3. National Farmers' Market Week. In celebration, we had coloring, storytime, shopping lists, and market bingo. Shown are the coloring tent and storytime with a county commissioner.

### Plans for the eCritic Carnival and Fall Festival:

- Leaf crafts and education
- Animal rescue at the market
- Bike to market event

## Lessons Learned

From each event being planned and carried out, we learned some things about market events:

- Instructions are less necessary with youth. Without structure, we are encouraged to use materials in preferred ways.
- Within the market team, tasks need to be done and provided to others earlier than thought.
- Activities geared toward children are activities that are approachable, and they can be incentivized, like receiving fresh foods for participating.
- It is rare and tough to stop market-goers to dance in public, especially without overwhelming the paid musicians.
- Everything should have an explanation for why. Research is not just for those in academia.
- The main event may not go as planned, and others may do well.

## For the Next Event Planner

If I had more time or opportunities, I would do a few things:

- Craft a mid-market dancing event in the middle of the market with inviting music,
- Coordinate more with the daily musician and vendors,
- Coordinate a bike valet,
- Work toward transitioning people from the standard vendor packaging, including incentives for customers, and
- Make events more collaborative and defining.

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