

ATHENS FARMERS MARKET

LOCAL, ORGANIC, SUSTAINABLE



Catherine Vrolijk
ADPR 5920
Spring 2023

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Situation Statement

Client Outline

Client History

Athens Farmers Market had its grand opening in May of 2008 in Bishop Park. What started as a passion for local food and agriculture for two UGA graduates grew into an idea for opening a farmers market for the Athens community. In 2010, the market partnered with Wholesome Wave Georgia and began doubling SNAP/EBT dollars.

To continue the fight against food insecurity in the Athens community, a food prescription program was added in 2017 to develop and diversify the access to fresh food by providing weekly tokens to families involved so they can provide their households with fresh fruits and vegetables.

There are currently two locations, one being the Saturday Bishop Park market, as well as the Wednesday market at Creature Comforts which was added in 2010. 15 years later, the local market is still flourishing and allows community members to participate in the food scene in Athens, Ga.

**ATHENS
FARMERS
MARKET**

Team Members

Abigail



Abigail: Market Manager

Abigail started with Athens Farmers Market as a volunteer in 2017 and soon became the Community Coordinator. Abigail started as the market manager in 2021. With a keen interest in both food and health, her goal is to foster the growth of the market as a hub for community engagement and improved food accessibility.

Monica



Monica: FARMRx Coordinator

In 2020, Monica began her position as the Program Manager for the FARMRx partnership. She manages and executes the *Food as Real Medicine Prescription* program, FARMRx.

Esther



Esther: Assistant Manager

Esther joined the AFM team as Assistant Manager in 2022 after being a professional cook for 12 years. Esther also manages the social media for all Athens Farmers Market accounts.

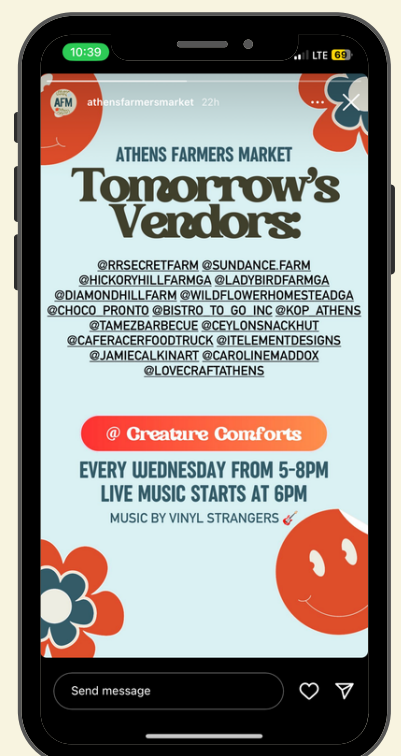
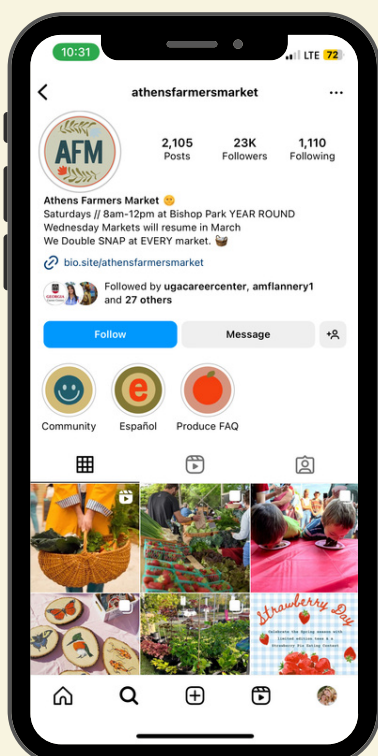
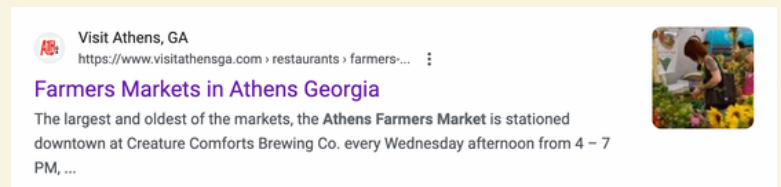
Current PR Efforts

Strong Social Media Presence

- Up-to-date, engaging and cohesive Instagram and Facebook that feature updates on the weekly markets, vendors, and events through AFM
- User-friendly website that provides an abundance of information
- Bright and happy aesthetic that is very inviting and goes along with the values of the market
- Makes use of posts, reels, and stories
- Posts at least twice a week

Traditional Media - Blogs

- The Athens Farmers Market has been featured in traditional media as well
 - Visit Athens, Georgia



Key Message



Athens Farmers Market aspires to support and engage with the Athens community by providing fresh, local and sustainable produce for all.

Local

It is important that every vendor and product is either made or grown locally. AFM prides itself on knowing every vendor and farmer by name.

Sustainable

Sustainability is very important and AFM is conscious of the impact of the market on the community and the environment.

Community

A sense of community is of utmost importance to AFM and ensuring success for all their farmers and vendors. They also aim to make access to fresh and healthy food easy for current and future customers in the Athens community.

Target Audience #1

- 22 years old
- Female
- Dietetics student at UGA
- Food Blogger
- Financially dependent on her parents but also has a part-time job
- Uses Instagram and TikTok for her food blog as well as a website
- Enjoys going on long walks and researching new recipes to share on her social media



Meet Megan!

Megan is 22 years old and a senior at UGA studying dietetics. She is graduating in the spring and will be moving to Charleston to pursue her internship and fellowship at the Medical University of South Carolina. Megan has a food blog where she shares weekly recipes and grocery lists for her followers. Megan enjoys researching new recipes and loves to shop at the Wednesday market for fresh fruits and vegetables to use for them. Megan shops at the farmers market every other week and loves to bring her friends and show them around the market.

Target Audience #2

- 32 years old
- Male
- Single
- Dog owner
- Works as a high school teacher at Clarke Central
- Lives in Oconee County
- Income is \$60,000 a year
- Uses Instagram as his social media outlet
- Is learning how to cook



Meet Andrew!

Andrew is a 32 year old high school teacher who works at Clarke Central High School. He recently moved to Athens, Georgia, from Asheville, North Carolina, and is looking to get more involved in the Athens community. He is single with no children and is learning to cook in his free time. He recently discovered AFM and has been going to shop for his weekly groceries because he is on a budget. He loves to walk his brown lab, Buster, every afternoon after work and enjoys bringing him to the Saturday market at Bishop Park.

Target Audience #3

- 45 years old
- Female
- Married
- Three kids (10, 12 and 15) who attend Athens Academy
- Works as a speech therapist at a private practice
- Her husband is an attorney
- Their annual shared family income is \$300,000
- Loves to walk with her friends in the morning
- Uses Instagram and Facebook as her social media outlets



Meet Sydney!

Sydney is a 45 year old female married with three children. She is a speech therapist and co-owns her practice with one other doctor. She works three days a week and is the full-time caregiver for her own children the other four days. She loves to go to the Wednesday market at Creature Comforts to do her produce shopping and will bring her two younger children so they can get dinner from the food trucks. She is very active on social media and follows the AFM account to be up to date with their events and weekly updates.



SWOT Analysis

S TRENGTHS

- Great social media presence
- Uses graphics and photos from the markets to showcase products
- Makes products accessible for low-income individuals and families
- Wide variety of products for purchase

W EAKNESSES

- Some vegetables are seasonal
- Bad weather
- The Wednesday market is closed for four months of the year

O PPORTUNITIES

- New partnerships
- Expanding to surrounding counties
- Making a TikTok account and reaching a younger demographic

T HREATS

- People shopping at grocery stores for their produce
- College students moving away for the summer months
- Not enough publicity



STRENGTHS

The Athens Farmers Market has a very strong social media presence with Instagram and Facebook accounts. They have 23,000 Instagram followers and post two to three times a week. They engage with their followers and post both photos of the market as well as graphics and reels. They also average around 400 likes on their posts.

Their aesthetic is bright and happy and this shows throughout their social media. They post reminders for the markets as well as what vendors and bands are going to be present that week. In addition to posting pictures of the produce, they also highlight special artists and their products that are available.

The Athens Farmers Market makes products and produce accessible for low-income individuals and families. They are in a partnership with Wholesome Wave Georgia to double SNAP benefits for community members who utilize an EBT card. This is a great program that AFM offers for community members and allows access to fresh, local produce for everyone.

The market has a wide variety of products that are available for purchase. They have a large amount of fresh produce at every market as well as fruit. They also have vendors who bring their art, soaps, prints, jewelry and more to be sold. In addition, there are also food trucks every week for people to get something to eat while they walk around and shop.



WEAKNESSES

The Athens Farmers Market does have a large variety of produce, but some vegetables are seasonal. In the winter months, summer vegetables are not available and so that may lead customers to do their shopping for that produce elsewhere.

Another weakness is the that the market is outdoors. Weather is always unpredictable and bad weather such as thunderstorms or lightning could lead to the cancellation of the market that day. This means loss of profit for that week and the vegetables won't be as fresh for the next week's market.

The Athens Farmers Market also only operates the Wednesday market eight months of the year. College-age students tend to go to the Wednesday market more often because it takes place in the afternoon hours in the day, so AFM could be losing customers during the winter months.



OPPORTUNITIES

The Athens Farmers market is already in partnership with a few organizations but there is always room for growth. Expanding into different areas and engaging in partnerships with schools, nonprofits and other organizations could really benefit AFM.

Another opportunity for Athens Farmers Market is expanding and opening markets in surrounding counties. The market could start as a pop-up to test out if it would do well in a new area, and if successful then continue with a weekly market.

Although the social media for Athens Farmers Market is very strong, they could benefit from making a TikTok account. A large demographic of college age students are active on TikTok and are influenced by the videos. TikTok also reaches a broad audience when a video goes viral, so AFM making videos showcasing their products and events would be a great opportunity.



THREATS

The main threat for the Athens Farmers Market would be grocery stores. The convenience of grocery stores and doing all the necessary shopping in one trip allows customers to buy their produce while shopping for everything else. This could lead to a decrease in profits for the market if people choose to buy their vegetables from the grocery store.

Since Athens is a college town, students leave for the summer months. The demographic of students who shop at the market is one of the target markets for AFM. This could lead to a decrease in profits during those months.

Although the farmers market is very active on social media, there is not enough local press talking about what they are doing. Members of the community who are not on social media may not be updated on the happenings of the market if it isn't in more forms of traditional media.

Deliverables

Item Descriptions



Press Release

The press release is to create publicity for Athens Farmers Market. It presents newsworthy information to a journalist or reporter and allows them to potentially write and publish a story. My press release informs and gives information regarding the return of the mid-week market at Creature Comforts.

Media List

A media list is a document with media contacts to reach out to with an idea or potential story. The list may include journalists, bloggers, reporters and influencers. To go through with a story, the idea must appeal to their target audience. My media list includes two sources from local Athens news outlets as well as an influencer and a social media account.

Traditional Pitch

A pitch introduces the story concept to journalists, editors, bloggers and influencers. A traditional pitch is normally sent through email for initial contact, but other forms of contact also work later in the communication process. I wrote an email pitch to the culture editor at the Red and Black informing her of the relevance of the story and how her readers would be interested.

Digital Pitch

Similar to a traditional pitch, a digital pitch is also introducing a story concept to journalists and influencers. The pitch should still be well-written and thoroughly researched. A digital pitch can start the conversation on social media rather than in an email. My digital pitch was an Instagram DM to an influencer informing her about the return of the Wednesday market.

Social Media Plan

Social media is a very important tool for PR professionals. It allows a brand or company to communicate with consumers and followers on a platform in a casual way. Creating content and engaging with the public are skills that brands must utilize. For Athens Farmers Market, I created ideas for posts on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

Blog

I wrote a blog called "Four Simple Changes You Can Make Daily to Help the Environment in Athens." This blog allows readers to learn what they can do in their daily life to live sustainably. The blog post promotes the Athens Farmers market by showcasing their reusable bags and sustainably grown produce. Blogs are a great way for companies to promote their business while being an easy read.

Press Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Catherine Vrolijk
912-580-1878
cev95788@uga.edu

The Early Return of Wednesday Market Evenings

ATHENS, (Ga.), March 1, 2023 – On March 8, the return of the Wednesday evening market at Creature Comforts will take place a month early. The Wednesday market operates from March to November.

Athens locals will be able to join farmers and artists from 5-8 p.m. to shop, eat and drink at Creature Comforts Brewing. There will be 15 vendors as well as live music. Like the Saturday Bishop Park market, AFM will match SNAP/EBT at the mid-week market which allows every \$1 to be worth \$2 for fresh fruits and veggies.

“I’m looking forward to the Wednesday market to be back in full swing,” said Perry Warnock, a UGA student. “I enjoy the mid-week break to shop fresh vegetables that are locally grown. It’s hard to make it out to the Saturday market at Bishop Park so I am excited for the Wednesday market to return.”

AFM will continue with different vendors and bands weekly this upcoming season. In addition to Wednesday at Creature Comforts, the market at Bishop Park takes place every Saturday from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

For more information and updates please visit <http://athensfarmersmarket.net/>.

About Athens Farmers Market:

Founded in 2008 by two UGA graduates, the Athens Farmers Market brings the Athens community together with fresh food in partnership with local farmers. AFM works to provide community members with an experience as well as fresh produce. AFM works to fight food insecurity in the Athens area by doubling SNAP/EBT dollars at their markets. Visit <http://athensfarmersmarket.net/our-story> as well as [@athensfarmersmarket](https://www.instagram.com/athensfarmersmarket) on Instagram and Facebook.

###

Media List

Outlet	Contact	Title	Email	Phone	Social	Category
Traditional						
Athens Banner-Herald	Andrew Shearer	Arts and Culture Reporter	shearer@onlineathens.com	N/A	Instagram Twitter	Arts and Culture
The Red and Black	Lilly Kersh	Culture Editor	elisabeth.kersh@uga.edu	N/A	LinkedIn	Culture
Digital						
Lunchwithlind	Lindy	Influencer	lunchwithlind@gmail.com	N/A	Instagram TikTok	Food and Drink
Athens Update	Lee Evans	Social Media Account	coley.evans@uga.edu athensupdate1@gmail.com	N/A	Instagram	Food and Drink

Media List



The Red and Black

It is smart to partner with the Red and Black because it is a very well-known and respected student-run newsroom and this story would fit with articles published under the culture section.

This organization is a great option for pitching this story because every UGA student receives email updates on stories they publish. Lilly Kersh, the culture editor at the Red and Black, has won awards for her articles written about culture in Athens and is a respected journalist.

Athens Banner-Herald

The Athens Banner-Herald is a daily newspaper located in Athens. This story would be a great partnership with this news outlet under the arts and culture section. Andrew Shearer has been working at the Athens Banner-Herald since 1998 and tells stories through his articles to connect the Athens community. This newspaper is circulated all over Athens and would reach a large audience.

Media List




LunchwithLind


Lindy is an Atlanta-based food influencer and posts about restaurants and deals all over Athens, Georgia. A UGA graduate, Lindy has 17.9k followers on Instagram and 2,343 on TikTok. This is a great amount of reach and engagement with her account. Lindy's style of content revolves around deals at restaurants and food influencing. It would be very smart to partner with her to make a video and post about the Athens Farmers Market because her followers are eager to learn about new and fun places to go.


Athens Update

Athens Update is a student-run social media account that posts weekly about deals and local events in Athens. With 8,889 followers on Instagram, they post about everything Athens, Georgia has to offer as well as promoting businesses. It would be smart to partner with Athens Update because many of their followers are UGA students so it would be a great demographic to reach with a post about or partnership with Athens Farmers Market.

Traditional Pitch

From: Catherine Eleanor Vrolijk (cev95788@uga.edu) 

To:  Elisabeth Dorothy Kersh Cc Bcc

Subject: Press Opportunity Priority 

Times New Ro... 10                      

Hi Lilly,

On Wednesday March 8, the Athens Farmers Market will return after the winter hiatus. This story is relevant and informs the community about the date and information regarding the return of the Wednesday farmer's market. I believe your readers will be interested and excited about the food, drinks and live music at the Creature Comforts venue.

It is important to support Athens local farmers as well as artists and musicians. Athens Farmers Market is working in partnership with many local organizations and businesses to fight food insecurity along with sharing their passion for food and community.

The Athens community has eagerly been awaiting the return of this mid-week market and this is a story that locals will be excited to read. For more information about the market, visit their website <http://athensfarmersmarket.net/>, as well as [@athensfarmersmarket](https://www.instagram.com/athensfarmersmarket) on social media.

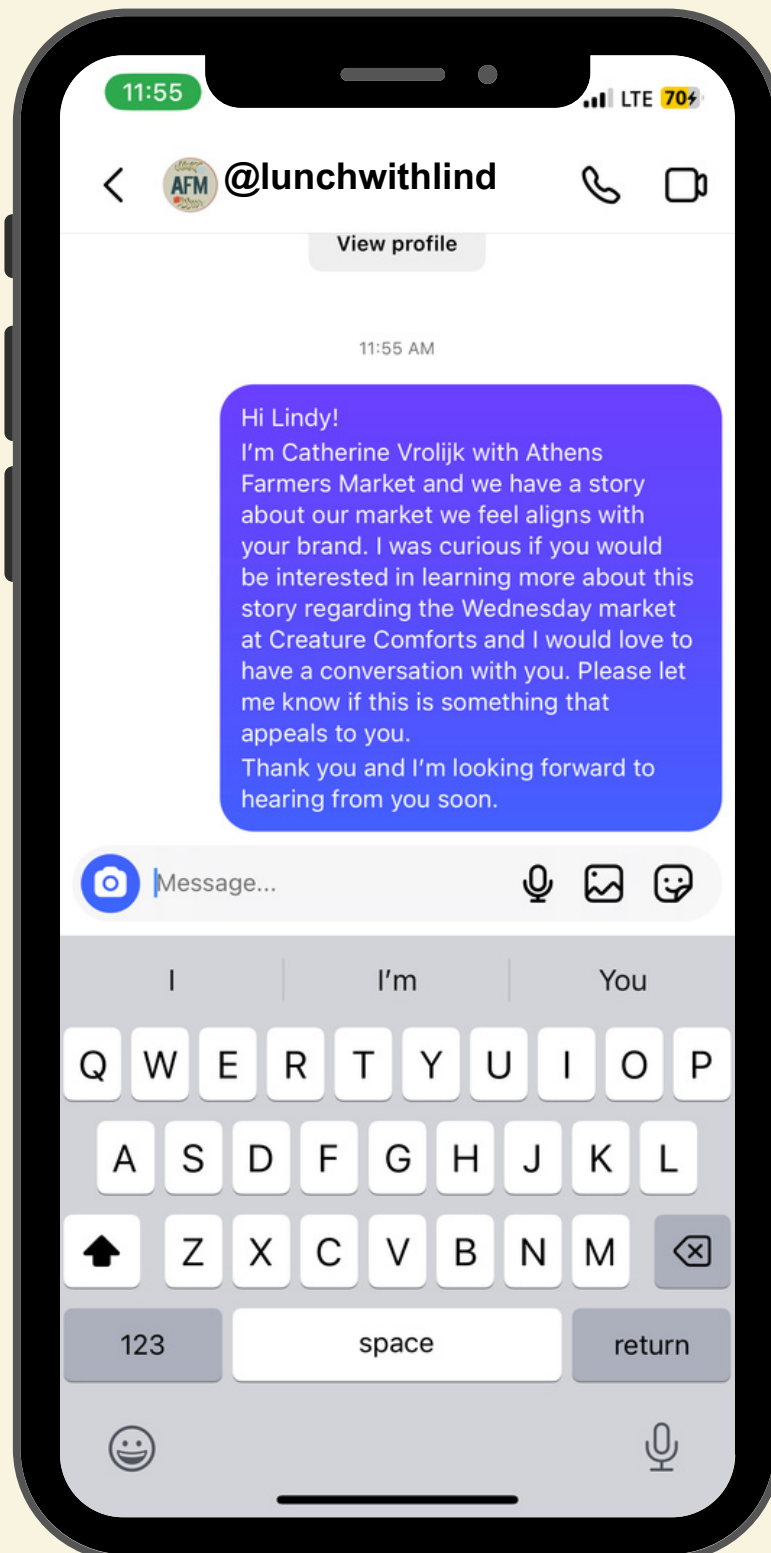
Thank you for your time,

Catherine

Catherine Vrolijk
A.B. Public Relations
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Digital Pitch



Social Media Plan

Instagram

Instagram is the social media platform that has the most reach with the audience of the Athens Farmers Market.

They have 23k followers and post two to three times a week. In the month of April, their account averaged 403.5 likes on posts and reels.

College-age students between 18 and 22 who attend the University of Georgia are the main target audience that we aim to reach on Instagram. The majority of students who attend UGA live in the Athens area which allows easy access to the weekly market and events that are promoted on Instagram.

There are many features on this social media platform that AFM does a great job utilizing including posts, reels, stories, polls, live videos and location tagging. One strategy to increase likes would be to post more infographic images because those tend to have a high engagement statistically.

Instagram Posts



This post is a traditional Instagram post. It is highlighting an event that is taking place at the farmers market. The post informs followers of the future event and where and when it takes place. I decided to post an infographic because those have done well on the AFM Instagram in the past.



This photo is an Instagram story. Followers are more likely to view stories so this is a great way to post reminders of upcoming events. I utilized the location feature so people can find directions to the event location through the Instagram story.

Instagram Posts



This post is an Instagram live.

Instagram lives are great for showing an event and sharing it with followers who might not be able to participate in person.

Followers can comment on live videos and ask questions to the person filming. This Instagram live will be filmed at the Earth Day event. People can smile and wave at the camera as they are picking up trash.

Social Media Plan

Facebook

The Athens Farmers Market Facebook page has 16k likes and 17k followers. Although this is not as many as their Instagram account, they still have a large following on Facebook.

The AFM Facebook and Instagram accounts are linked so the same posts and photos are visible on both platforms. This is a smart way to be consistent with posting throughout the different platforms.

Adults 40 to 55 living in the Athens area are the main target audience we aim to reach through Facebook. This demographic tends to spend more time on Facebook than on other social media platforms, so utilizing it is beneficial.

AFM does a great job of creating events and posts on their Facebook timeline but there is always room for growth. They are not getting far as many likes as their Instagram page so incorporating more posts, stories and live streams could help increase engagement.

Facebook Posts

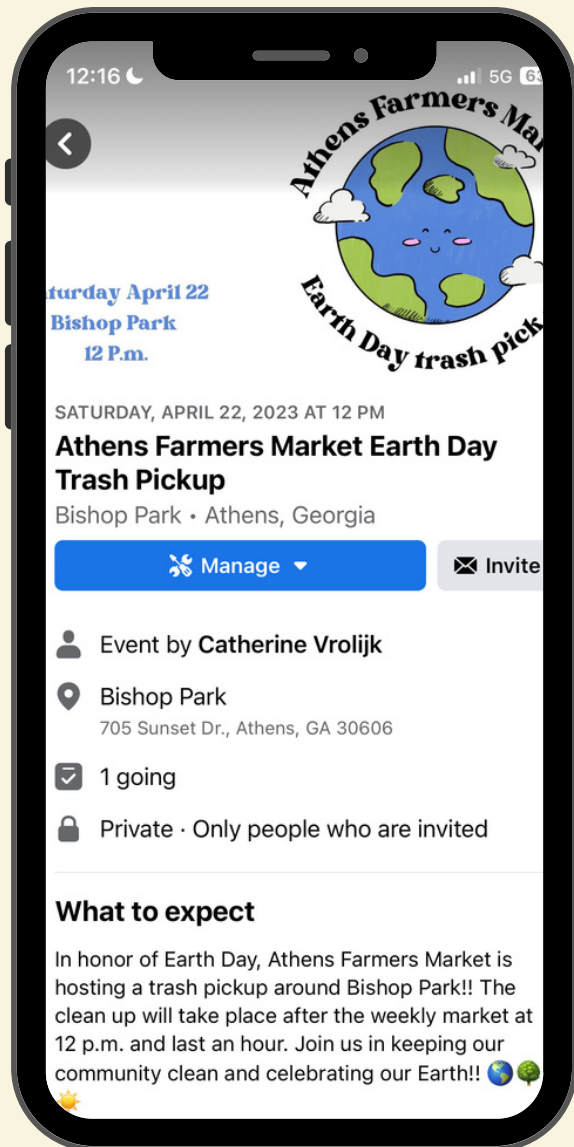


This post is a story on Facebook. The story feature is an easy way to share information fast. Infographics are great for stories and you can add animation to them like this story here. Stories are also helpful because they allow the owner of the account to see who has viewed it.



This is a traditional Facebook post with a slide show of photos. This type of post would be synced with the Instagram and posted to both platforms. It is suited for Facebook because this is the type of event mothers would want to bring their children. It states the location and the time in the caption.

Facebook Posts



This event was created for the trash pickup in honor of Earth Day. Facebook Events are a great way to spread the word and post all the necessary information. The date, time, location and host of the event are all visible on the event page. The creator is able to invite people and they can RSVP. Public events, especially those helping the environment, are great for brand awareness.



Catherine Vrolijk created a private event. ...

Just now · ✉

Saturday April 22
Bishop Park
12 P.m.



SAT, APR 22 AT 12 PM

Athens Farmers Market Earth Day Trash Pickup
Bishop Park · Athens, GA

Social Media Plan

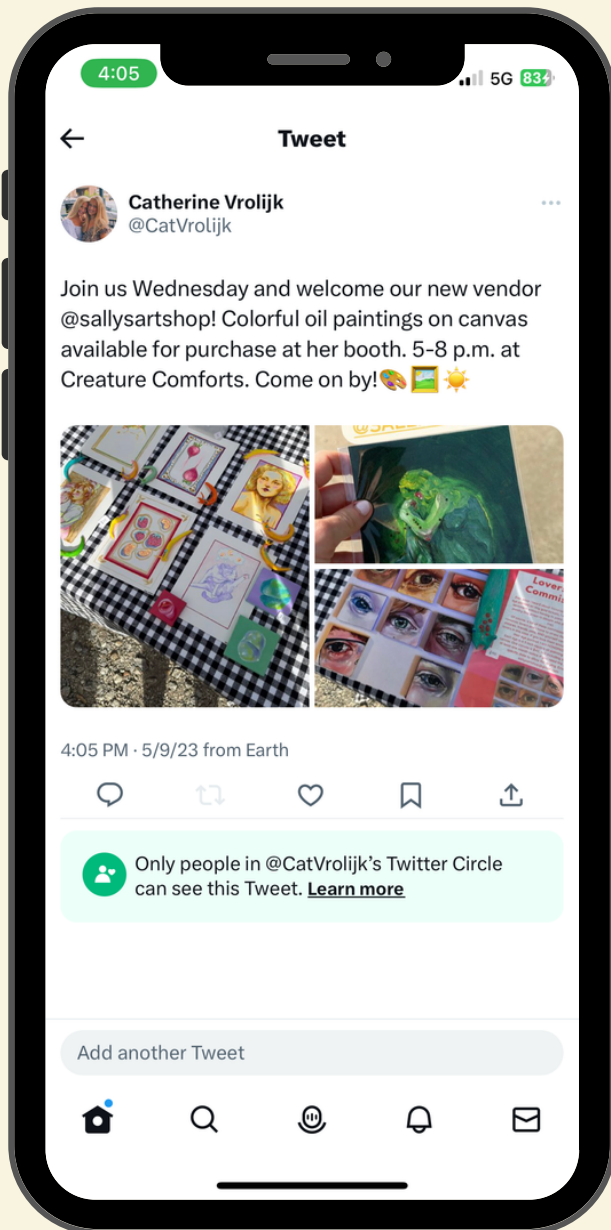
Twitter

Twitter is a great social media platform to engage with followers and post content. Athens Farmers Market does have a Twitter account but it has not been posted on since 2019. The target audience for this platform are adults between the ages of 25 and 35. This group is young adults who live in the Athens area and are interested in a healthy lifestyle and supporting local farmers and businesses.

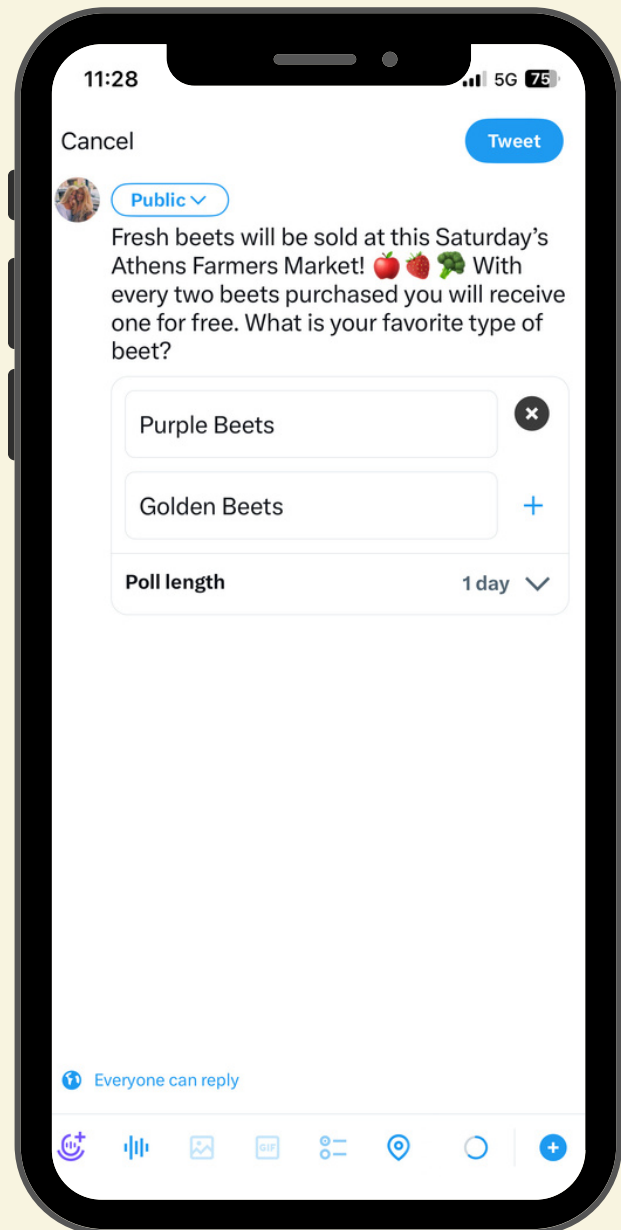
Twitter can be very beneficial for awareness and engagement with a brand so AFM will start posting again regularly and update their account with the current logos. Syncing the Twitter posts with the Instagram and Facebook will make sure the content posted on those platforms is also on Twitter.

Twitter is great for sharing links to blogs and websites and incorporating this will be useful on this platform. Polls are also a great way to receive feedback from followers on Twitter.

Twitter Posts

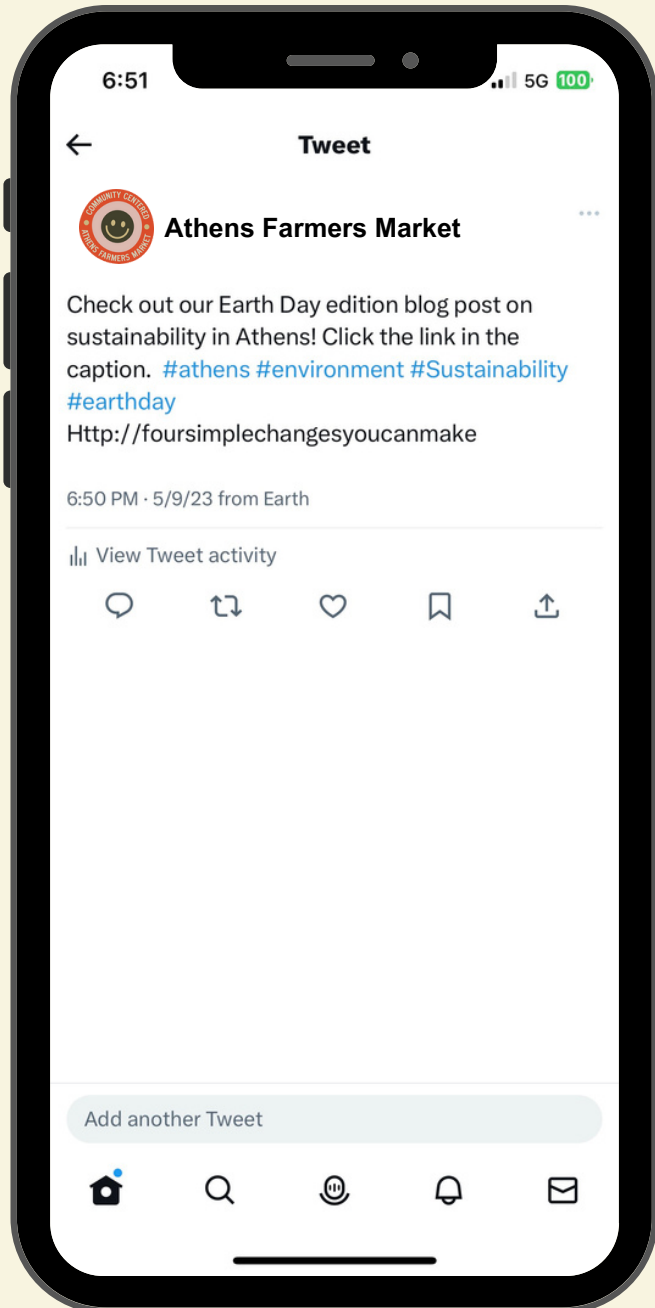


This is a traditional Twitter post with a slide show of images. It showcases the art at a booth from the Wednesday market at Creature Comforts. The caption gives the information about the artist and her art.



This post uses the poll function on Twitter. This is an interactive way for followers to engage with the post and learn about the information presented in the caption. This post is letting followers know about a deal on beets the upcoming weekend.

Twitter Posts



This Twitter post utilizes hashtags and embedding a link. Hashtags allow Twitter users to easily follow along with topics they are interested in. You can also embed links to articles and websites. This tweet has a link to my blog so users can easily find it and learn more about how to be sustainable in Athens, Georgia.

With Earth Day just around the corner, the [Athens Farmers Market](#) wants to help you find ways to be sustainable in Athens and reduce the impact of climate change for our planet. There are always simple changes you can make in your everyday life to make a positive impact on our environment. Sustainability doesn't just improve the quality of our lives today; it also protects our ecosystems and preserves natural resources for future generations. In today's post, we will discuss examples of these four simple things you can easily do to help reduce your own footprint.



Reusable Bags

Single use plastic bags are some of the most harmful forms of waste that are put into the environment. Plastic bags are extremely hard to recycle and most end up in landfills where they take hundreds of years to degrade. In addition, they often pollute bodies of water and can be fatal to the wildlife and ecosystems. Using reusable bags can significantly reduce this and is an easy and sustainable change to make. At Athens Farmers Market, you can purchase a reusable tote with the AFM logo for all your shopping needs at the market and anywhere else. You can keep a few extra bags in your home and car and use them whenever needed.

Single-Use Plastics

Single-use plastics are a major contributor to plastic pollution. Although plastic straws, water bottles, utensils and other single-use plastics are often convenient, they are detrimental to the environment. By switching to reusable alternatives, you can significantly reduce the amount of plastic waste that is generated. Reusable coffee mugs, water bottles and straws are great examples of sustainable alternatives that can be used instead of the single-use plastics. The Athens Farmers Market is a great place to find [reusable mugs](#). At the vendor booth there are many different handmade clay mugs made by a local artist. These are great for morning coffee and tea while also being sustainable.



Compost Food Waste

Food waste is a major problem and a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Instead of food ending up in landfills, you can compost your waste and turn it into nutrient-dense soil. If you don't have the resources to compost at your home, there are many composting programs and services available you can take advantage of in your city. The [Athens-Clarke County Solid Waste Department](#) offers drop-off for food scraps and compostable products for composting. This program offers the Athens locals the chance to compost their food waste instead of it going to the landfill. There are many benefits to composting environmentally as well. Composting retains large volumes of water, which can help prevent and reduce erosion and runoff as well as establishing vegetation. Overall, composting is a very important aspect of sustainable solid waste management.



Buying Produce Locally

Produce that is purchased from local farmers can contribute to sustainability in many ways. When you buy produce that has been sourced locally it travels shorter distances from farm to consumer. This reduces carbon emissions that relate to transportation which minimizes the environmental impact of long-distance shipping. So, buying local grown produce supports a more sustainable food system. All the produce available at the Athens Farmers Market has been locally grown and sourced. Shopping for produce at the farmers market instead of a grocery store is a great way to live sustainably.

In conclusion, making small changes in your daily routine can have a big impact on the environment. By using reusable bags, using energy-efficient light bulbs, reducing single-use plastics and composting food waste, you can help reduce your environmental footprint and support a sustainable future for our planet.

Time: Two-minute read


Audience: I am an ordinary individual looking for easy and simple changes I can make in my everyday life that will allow me to live a more sustainable lifestyle.

Key Words: Sustainable, environment

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to Athens Farmers Market for allowing me to visit and research such a wonderful organization. I loved learning about the mission and atmosphere surrounding the farmers market.

I want to thank Tom Cullen for teaching a wonderful class. I truly learned so much about myself and PR this semester. Although there were tricky moments, I am proud of work I have created.

Finally I want to thank my friends and family. I am so grateful for the unwavering support system I have in my corner and I wouldn't be where I am today without them.