

Eco-Fair celebrates living the green life

Valley businesses share ideas for promoting conservation at festival.

By Lindsay Wood

Six-year-old Oliver Smith eyed the recycled materials carefully, looking for the perfect piece to complete his project.

The Jackson elementary school student had pieced together an abstract wooden and cardboard boat. Hot glue held scraps of wood and toilet paper rolls together to form the hull. He searched each row of recyclables on the Remida Project's table at last weekend's Eco-Fair to find a motor.

"I think I can make a motor out of aluminum foil," Oliver said, fingering a twisted up piece of foil.

His mom, Heather Smith, looked on from a distance.

"He really likes to build things," she said.

The clump of kids surrounding the Remida Project proved that most kids enjoy building, crafting and using their imagination — no matter the medium. Sponges, marker tops, colorful tiles, telephone cords, egg cartons, jar lids and the like all were grasped by little fingers and turned into works of art. The display turned out to be one of the Eco-Fair's most popular booths.

Jackson 7-year-old Kayli Genzer made her own mosaic with sparkling pom-poms, tiles and bottle caps. Rebecca Genzer admired her daughter's "original work of art," saying the project "teaches her to use [waste] for a different purpose." The pair arrived at the Eco-Fair after a morning of volunteering at the community spring cleanup.



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Kids at the Eco-Fair jump at the chance to make art with waste materials as the Remida Project encourages some creative minds. Their supplies include nonrecyclable items like jar lids, telephone cords and egg cartons.

Jackson resident Ben Blount, 9, was making a vehicle out of a clean strawberry box and some office chair wheels.

Preschool teachers Erin Smith of Journeys School and Erin Tanzer of Teton Valley Community School got the idea off the ground after seeing a presentation about the Remida Creative Recycling Centre in Reggio Emilia, Italy. The idea behind the

project is to see waste materials as resources. The Italian organization distributed the materials to schools, senior centers, recreation centers and to people with disabilities to promote creativity and sustainability.

"We wanted to connect Jackson to a sustainable project in art," Erin Smith said.

So the women let their prekindergarten students go wild last year with their own Remida Project. The results, a PVC pipe rocket and spools of thread designed like a roller coaster toy you'd find at a pediatrician's office, were experimental and sensory. The teachers were so pleased they brought it to Eco-Fair on a grander scale, with help from community grants and support.

"It teaches kids the concepts of environmentalism and sustainability without being preachy," Tanzer said.

Erin Smith and Tanzer invited Hoff's Bikesmith owner Tim Hoff to create and decorate a bicycle trailer using found materials.

Hoff was surrounded by a group of pint-sized engineers suggesting placement of decorative marker tops around the basket. He recycled and reused all his materials — from the reconstructed bike trailer basket to the bicycle it was attached to.

"What's better than functional art?" Hoff said. "There is so much trash and

sustainable materials in the landfills. It just needs to be used."

The Remida Project fit right in with the Eco-Fair's overall theme of reduce, reuse and recycle. The fair was hosted by the Jackson Hole Energy Sustainability Project.

More than 2,500 people came to the 10th annual event at Snow King Ball Field. People bought new plants for their gardens, admired the rehabilitated birds of prey from the Teton Raptor Center, chomped on portobello burgers from Jackson Whole Grocer and browsed energy-efficiency displays. About 70 valley businesses and organizations set up booths to promote conservation and green lifestyles.

Bands Delusion Blues Duo, Black Mother Jones and Uncle Stack and the Attack provided musical entertainment all afternoon.

The Plastic Bag Monster and the Recycling Avenger had an epic battle in which the monster was conquered and lassoed into submission.

Eco-Fair coordinator Annie Riddell and Jackson Hole Energy Sustainability Project executive director Shelley Simonton declared the event a total success.

"We were really thrilled with it and so pleased with the turnout, the spirit, the enthusiasm and the quality of the booths," Riddell said.



Katie Grady, 4, shows off her Hula-Hooping skills at the Eco-Fair on Saturday as hundreds gather at the base of Snow King for the annual event.

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