

10th Annual Turtle Island News Earth Day Festival draws thousands

By Donna Duric
Writer

The Turtle Island News' 10th Annual Earth Day Festival last Wednesday was a time of rebirth.

Thousands of trees were handed out to community members eager to usher in the spring weather after a particularly cold start to the season and now, Mother Earth will get a fresh helping of trees.

The weather cooperated and people's spirits were high during the festival, which saw dozens of booths set up in the Turtle Island News plaza showcasing green products and environmentally-friendly projects and services.

A beautiful spring sun

ried history, as a favourite and highly prized tree of the Osage tribe in Oklahoma and the southeastern United States.

It's been favoured for centuries for its strength and pliability, especially popular for use in bow-making. Visitors were curious about the "orange" fruit that would spring from the trees. It's distantly related to the Florida orange tree everyone is used to but eating the fruit is not recommended because it may cause an upset stomach.

The bright green fruit, once ripened, is used for traditional medicinal purposes and today for decorating around the home.

Other attractions at the



Droves of children from Jamieson Elementary stopped by to enjoy the fun and get a free tree. (Photo by Jim C. Powless)



Youngsters enjoyed interacting with a female hawk at the festival. (Photo by Jim C. Powless)

shone down on thousands of visitors who lined up in droves to get their annual free tree from the Turtle Island News, the most popular booth at the festival every year.

Six varieties of trees native to the Carolinian Forest zone here in southern Ontario were handed out: the ever-popular white pine; white cedar; black walnut; sugar maple; and the curious Osage Orange tree and coffee tree.

The Osage Orange tree can be found throughout the Carolinian forest in southern Ontario and has a sto-

festival included a beautiful female hawk from Raptors Conservatory in Simcoe, which drew oohs and ahhs from visitors getting an up-close look at the majestic creature.

There was also an archaeological display from renowned archaeologist Paul Racher, who has worked on many digs for the Six Nations community and is pushing for indigenous reclamation of archaeological practices in Ontario.

There was a bouncy castle for the kids, at the Six Nations Fire department

found itself overtaken by the little ones fascinated by the chance to sit inside a real live fire truck, and a kids' activity booth where youth decorated their own birdhouses.

Busloads of kids from OMSK and Jamieson elementary came by to partake in the fun, to learn about Mother Earth and enjoy a free barbecue and cake from the Turtle Island News.

Guests from Six Nations Community Living were also thrilled to get a free tree and Miss Six Nations Make Emarthle even

stopped by to get a free tree.

Many residents had their own advice for successful tree planting tips, including taking hair from your hairbrush and planting it around the roots of the tree to ward off pests and fungi.

Six Nations Polytechnic had a booth showing off different native seeds, and free packets for those who dropped by the booth to chat.

Six Nations' very own Mohawk Seedkeeper Terrylynn Brant spoke about the importance of saving seeds

and growing GMO-free foods.

"Birders" Rachel Powless and her husband, Carl Pascoe, showcased a variety of sweet little birds native to southern Ontario, thrilling the youngsters that came out with a tame Bluejay they were able to pet.

A Nissan Leaf, a 100 per cent electric car, was also on display to show visitors what an electric car looks like.

And there were prizes thanks to our sponsors and many supporters!

Ohsweken Speedway provided a 10 speed bike, Arrows Express two children's bicycles and Caledonia Canadian Tire provided two bikes.

A grand prize of an Ipad supplied by local barrister and solistor Aaron Detlor was won by well-known community member Janie Jamieson.

"You've opened up a whole new world in our house," she said.

Ancaster Home Depot donated a new house ceiling fan and Lowes a whole bag of green products and gardening items.

Lone Wolf provided a kids host of toys from childrens toy gardening tools to a toy wheel barrel and more.

A rain barrel from Hamil-

tons Eco-House was won by our ever intrepid Six Nations Fire Department's "Sparky" who provided alot of entertainment for those watching as he lifted it onto the fire truck.

And there was a ton of gift certificates, plants solar lights, games, and a slew of other prizes.

CHCH News from Hamilton showed up to cover the event, highlighting the importance of the paper's commitment to replenishing the trees used to print the paper every year.

Since the event was started by Turtle Island News publisher Lynda Powless a decade ago, more than 8,000 trees have been given out and planted in southern Ontario.

With the continual loss of the Carolinian forest at a rate of two per cent a year, Powless said, "We need to replace that. We are a newspaper and we use trees, so we had to give back what we were taking out."

In 10 years, she added, "with the help of Six Nations and area residents together we have planted a forest!"

Nia:weh to all those who came and all our suppliers and donors.