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Green thumbs abound at annual Eco Fair

JODI STREAHLE, @thedailyjournal 8:33 p.m. EDT May 3, 2015

MILLVILLE – The annual Wheaton Arts Eco Fair attracted a record amount of vendors this year, organizers said, offering visitors a variety of locally grown plants, handmade items, and hands-on crafts.

The native plant sale hosted by the Cumberland County Master Gardeners was a main attraction for many. They sold vegetables, shrubs, flowers and herbs for as little as \$1.

"I do the bulk of my plant shopping here. In fact, I wait to buy plants until this sale," said Amy Peseller of Millville, a resident potter at Wheaton Arts.

Patti Schmid of Vineland was on the hunt for native plants that would attract butterflies to her yard.

Carol Childress of Maple Shade selects a hanging basket at the Wheaton Arts Eco Fair. **The flowers were grown by the individuals at Easter Seals in Millville.**

(Photo: Jodi Strehle)

"I like all the native and unusual plants," she said.

The plant sale was an educational outlet as well as a fundraiser for the Master Gardeners.

"People wait for this sale every year because we are known for our native plants," said Pam Burton, coordinator of the Master Gardener Program. "And they flock back every year to find rare plants."

The Eco Fair, a community open house, was presented by Wheaton Arts and the Cumberland County Improvement Authority. TD Bank was the event sponsor. About 40 vendors participated in the event at the Wheaton Arts and Cultural Center.

"It's generating enough interest among vendors now that we have the most we have ever had," said Janet Peterson, director of marketing and public relations at Wheaton Arts.

The event delivered the "reduce, reuse and recycle" message. "It's what we are about. We practice being green at Wheaton Arts," said Peterson.

All of the Wheaton Arts attractions were open during the fair, and admission was free.



"Not only are they getting the event, they are getting the Wheaton Arts experience. Hopefully they will visit all of our areas of interest and come back in the future," Peterson said.

The Cumberland County Improvement Authority unveiled its new education trailer at the Eco Fair. Inside the interactive trailer, visitors learned facts about recycling and found ways to get involved.

Various businesses and community groups offered a variety of local products. The selection included air plants, flower baskets, pottery, jewelry, honey, goat soap and much more. Groups like the New Jersey Water Association and the National Foundation for the Blind NJ as well as companies like Cumberland Air Solutions and Spectrum Energy Inc. offered information.

"It's a really nice fair," said Eric Nyman of Millville. He is usually a food vendor at the Eco Fair, but this year he attended as a visitor. "It's really nice to be able to enjoy all this stuff. The weather is perfect, and I really like the selection of plants," he said.