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## Bear Creek fest touts family, environment

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**SUMMIT STATION — Amy Anderson tapped a nail into the roof of a bluebird house.**

The Schuylkill Haven woman then handed the hammer over to her son, Bradley, 2, who pounded the nail until it was flush with the wood.

This was just one activity at the sixth annual Bear Creek Festival sponsored by the Schuylkill County Conservation District.

“We were never here before and heard a lot of good things about the event,” Anderson said.

The event was held Saturday and Sunday at the Schuylkill County Fairgrounds.

“The bluebird house building encourages team building. Parents and children work together to complete the project,” said Darlene Robbins, executive director of the Northeast Pennsylvania Manufacturers and Employers Association. “Working as a team is the building block of what we are trying to do here — businesses, communities and families working as a team to become more aware of their environment.”

The festival started out small, but has grown to be a popular spring event. It’s a free, family event, with demonstrations by the Red Creek Wildlife Center and blacksmiths. There is a trout fishing derby, kayaking demonstrations, food, games and many other family activities.

According to Tom Davidock, county natural resources specialist, the goal of the event is, as always, watershed awareness. This year’s theme was “Sustaining Communities. Sustaining Families.”

“All of us have a responsibility to leave this world a little bit better that it was when we found it,” Davidock said in a press release. “Improving our natural environment requires that we also strengthen our communities and involve our children in the process.”

Davidock said the Bear Creek Festival is an opportunity to take people back to the basics and share with them the wonders of nature and the importance of community.

A popular event was tie-dyeing T-shirts with acid mine drainage.

Light- and dark-orange T-shirts hung on a clothesline strung outside one of the buildings as parents and children sloshed around dishpans filled with the mine drainage, soaking white T-shirts until they darkened.

On Sunday, Heather Garrity dunked a shirt with her daughter, Abby.

“I worked at the conservation district for five years, so I know this is a great family event,” she said. “It gives me and my daughter some quality time together.”

“It is good to see so many families out here,” said Paul Lohin, conservation district chairman. “The importance of the environment and all the work that is being done by various groups should be shown to the community and to families.

“It is the youth that is our future. By spending time here today, they will see what is going on around them and get involved in conserving the environment.”

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