



JANET JEYSEN/THE NEWS TRIBUNE

Justin Tate, 12, left, helps his brother Jamie, 8, make a wooden tissue box at the Home Depot booth during the Livable Communities Fair held at the Tacoma Narrows Airport in Gig Harbor on Saturday. Next to them, Rochard Ware, 5, gets an assist from his mom, Charity, on his box.

Learning livability, plus some easy fish

LIVABLE FAIR: Event offers seminars on home, environmental care

By Bart Ripp
THE NEWS TRIBUNE

In a chilled but filled hangar at Tacoma Narrows Airport, they recycled rain, caught rainbow trout, met Rhubarb the Tacoma Rainiers mascot, petted drug-sniffing dogs, pondered solutions to pollution and learned the wonders of composting.

Those were a sliver of the activities available to people who took time on a pleasant Saturday to attend

the first Livable Communities Fair.

Sponsored by Pierce County and a handful of area businesses, utilities and foundations, the one-day fair attracted about 5,000 people to 124 exhibits and about 30 seminars on ways to improve life in the South Sound.

The fair was free, as was the first rainbow trout Kim Coil ever caught.

Kim is 10, lives on Fox Island, is a fifth-grader at Voyager Elementary School in Gig Harbor and had the thrill of a lifetime at the Livable Communities Fair. Kim caught a trout at the portable pond set up by the Cooperative Trout Enhancement

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Fair

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Program of Summer.

"I just went over there," Kim said, pointing to the backyard swimming pool built on the airport tarmac and brimming with trout.

"I caught one and released it," she said. "Then I caught this one, and they hit it over the head with a stick."

Kim's prize trout was stored in a plastic bag at the Camp Fire USA booth where she volunteered to sell candy when not fishing.

Founded in 1910 as an activity for girls in Thetford, Vt., to emulate their Boy Scout friends, Camp Fire Girls, as the group was called until 1977, was started by Dr. Luther and Charlotte Gulick as a place for youths to learn responsibility, respect the environment and work together.

Luther Gulick is hardly remembered today. He developed the YMCA triangle symbol, helped form the Boy Scouts, contributed to establishing the rules of basketball and is immortalized at the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass.

"No amount of lovely old towns and grand cathedrals can make up for the comradeship and out-of-doors and the ... beauties of life in the pine woods," Charlotte Gulick once said.

Kim Coil never heard of Charlotte or Doc Gulick, but she did enjoy selling Almond Roca candy at the fair to raise money for Camp Fire USA's Orca Council and its Niyawa program.

"That's Indian for 'playful fox,'" Kim said. "I'm selling the candy to help our (Niyawa) club and get to meet different people."

Cherishing the land was a theme at the fair. One booth distributed maps, newsletters and information about the Great Peninsula Conservancy. The group, based in Bremerton, supports historic property and land around Gig Harbor and the Key Peninsula, and throughout Kitsap and Mason counties.

"People are interested in learning how we're preserving the land," said Sherrie Kilborn of Gig Harbor, a volunteer with Peninsula Heritage Land Trust.

The trust helps conserve such historic properties as the Lay-Wildrose

Preserve in Rosedale, the Home Cemetery and the Lind Forest in

Home, Wollochet Estuary and the Morford Farm in Gig Harbor.

Just as land and youths, fish and dogs were vital to the Livable Com-

munities Fair, so was rain.

It didn't rain a drop on the fair, but that did not deter Dan Borba from displaying the robust tools of his trade and distributing blue hand-made business cards for Down to Earth Gadgets & Gizmos. Borba is identified on the card as "out standing in his field - harvesting the rain since 1999."

Borba lives on Tacoma's Hilltop. He buys 55-gallon plastic barrels - big, brown, bulky things - from Nalley's, which used them for storing pickles and relish. Once scoured of the tangy fragrance of dill, the barrels are refitted by Borba with a filter, overflow valve and a spigot.

He sells the barrels to people for collecting rain from their gutters and downspouts. Rainwater is perfect for gardening, cleaning the house and washing your car.

Borba made a statement that few at the fair could say.

"I have about 95 barrels all over town," he said.

He stores barrels at his house, his parents' house near Point Defiance, his sister's house in Parkland and at L'Arche, a program that works with developmentally disabled people near Parkland.

"This has been a pretty good winter," Borba said. "We've had a lot of rain, and we can always use a lot more."

Borba also may have been the only fair exhibitor to have been featured in a front-page story in The Wall Street Journal. That bit of fame happened Aug. 1.

"Now wherever I go," Borba said, "people want to know about rain. I tell them to wait until summer. That's when we really need it."

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