



It's fun being green: Earth Day a hit again at Hi-Desert Nature Museum



Steve Packard of Yucca Valley takes a peak at the sun through Tom O'Key's solar telescope during Earth Day celebrations Saturday at the Yucca Valley Community Center.

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By Jimmy Biggerstaff Hi-Desert Star

YUCCA VALLEY — Participants in Hi-Desert Nature Museum's annual Earth Day celebration were exposed to all things sustainable, from catching rain runoff from roofs for future irrigation to recycling of expended shell casings from the Marine Corps base.

Twenty-eight exhibitors provided information and sold everything from solar power to worms for compost piles. Twenty-three crafters showed off their wares including jewelry, nature photography and ceramics.

The museum has been observing Earth Day since 2005 and estimates around 2,500 or 3,000 participants cycled through the community center throughout the day.

Since one of the museum's core competencies is nature education, this event is a good fit.

"What better venue than Earth Day?" Stefanie Ritter, museum biologist, posited. "It's perfect."

After careful consideration, Ritter decided she doesn't have a favorite exhibit, diplomatically declaring, "They all have something to offer." The biologist did note people dig the composting exhibit, and Copper Mountain College's Desert Studies Club had a good display with its tortoises.

Rushingwind Project, Brilliant Dance, Shadow Mountain Band, Strawberry Butterfly and Richard & Mary provided entertainment in the courtyard. Food was provided by Natural Sisters Café.

Ritter starts organizing the April celebration in January, sending out invitations and determining if prospective participants meet Earth Day's "green" theme.

Ritter said organizing the event is exhausting work but it's "fun to see it all come together."