

Monday, April 14, 2008

Cohoes comes alive on 'Second Sunday'

By Tom Caprood, The Record

COHOES — Crowds of residents assembled for an afternoon of educational activities Sunday as several city businesses came together to host "Second Sunday," a monthly event designed to attract people to the downtown.

The event, which was sponsored by the Harmony Marketplace, Beauknits Yarn Shop and DNIPROS European Foods, offered wine and food tasting, spinning demonstrations, a class on transplanting herbs, and a display of several llamas to entertain the children and show adults where a large amount of yarn comes from.

"Downtown is usually very quiet on Sundays, and to bring this kind of life to the city today is just terrific," said Mayor John McDonald, who said he was proud to see that local business owners had taken the initiative to start the program on their own.

"Government can't always do everything. When people like this are very motivated, it's a big help," he added. The most popular activity of the event was an educational class that was offered in a currently-vacant section of the Harmony House Marketplace, where Ryan McDaid, an employee of Harvest Moon Hydroponics, taught more than 25 residents the benefits of growing their own organic herbs.

Diane Conroy-LaCivita, co-owner of the Harmony House Marketplace, noted that city business owners had decided to hold the event on a Sunday, when stores were normally closed, to showcase what downtown had to offer.

"Working collaboratively has been very beneficial because we believed people would be more apt to come if everyone was open and welcoming," said Conroy-LaCivita, who noted that, to date, all of the educational programs had sold out.

Conroy-LaCivita was also one of only two recipients of a state agro-tourism grant, which she will use to fund her "Bountiful New York" program, offering a series of bus trips to farms and other producers of New York products.

Barbara Hildreth, owner of Beauknits yarn shop, noted that she chose to help support the event to help offset the dry spell which hits the city between October and April each year.

"Diane and I talked about the need to do something to bring people into the community and we believe that this is an excellent way to get all of the businesses together and work to promote downtown Cohoes," said Hildreth