

Another successful year for La Casa Verde

Saturday's fourth annual La Casa Verde, held in McMinnville's Granary District, celebrated green living and sustainability with a variety of activities designed to entice people to linger and learn.

The day-long event opened with Kit Crane singing the national anthem, followed by a moment of silence for the Boston Marathon victims. Then, with a countdown starting at 10, a champagne bottle was popped to launch the first ever La Casa Verde/Earth Day 7.5K run. Phil DeMonty won the inaugural running.

"I think it's become a cornerstone spring Earth Day event," said Zack Geary of Cellar Ridge Custom Homes, the founding sponsor. He said the event drew people from a huge footprint around the region. In all, 22 suppliers and partners staffed booths focusing on aspects of green building, including insulation, landscaping and window replacement.

Ten people participated in Friday and Saturday's tiny house building. They named the resulting structure Casa Pequeña.

"It was fun watching it go up," said Carson Benner, co-owner of Cellar Ridge.

Geary said the participants formed a "cool bond" as they went about building the 100-square-foot structure, using a trailer as their platform.

Every one of the 42 windows removed from the McMinnville Cooperative Ministries building during its recent energy retrofitting were used to construct cold frames. Benner said the Cooperative was "thrilled" at the project.

Miller Woods donated material to make 100 birdhouses, and Maria Vicksta spent the day helping others assemble them. "The bird community is going to have a great increase of livability," Geary said.

Third Street Pizza donated everything needed to make pizza, and Eugene-based Ninkasi donated kegs of beer. Both were offered in exchange for donations to McMinnville Area Habitat for Humanity, which raised \$800.

A brewing workshop drew a sold-out crowd of 21 people, who had seven batches bubbling during the event. Meanwhile, Geary successfully defended his Golden Egg chicken tractor race crown.

"It was a tight race, but I was able to come out and win in true showboat fashion," Geary said. His race included a 360-degree spin.

Eric Grimstad, who had joined Geary in creating promotional videos for the event, suffered a broken wrist that left him unable to compete. In his stead, Eric Lauber powered the Buchanan-Cellers entry, while Gretchen Phelps represented Habitat.

Prior to the chicken tractor race, an egg and spoon race was held for the children. And Geary and Benner think it's worth continuing in future years.



Marcus Larson / News-Register D.K. Williams, Dee Williams and Tony Diethelm have a blast participating in the Tiny House Building workshop during La Casa Verde.

“I always like to think we can judge a successful event by the chalk art,” Geary said. “There was almost no real estate left. It was everywhere.”

Black ‘n Blue, Jack Ruby Presents and The Hill Dogs provided live entertainment throughout the day.

That evening, the Green Achievement Awards were presented in a winemaker’s dinner at Dominio IV.

Winning a special inspirational award were the students and staff from Columbus Elementary School. Working with Terracycle, the school recycles non-traditional items like juice boxes and potato chip bags.

Grow International, owned by Jerry Tindall, was presented the green achievement award for business enterprises. Stoller Family Estate was honored with a green award for wineries.

In the food category, Nick’s Italian Café and its owners, Carmen Peirano and Eric Ferguson, were honored for their dedication to both locally sourced food and green building. They used reclaimed wine staves in their recent redesign, presenters noted.

Sherrie Mathison, director of Yamhill County Solid Waste, won the green educators award for her eight-week Master Recycler class. The Chemeketa Community College Yamhill Valley Campus won the green educational institution award.

Katherine Holm of Linfield College claimed green student honors. Rev. Mark Pederson accepted the green leadership award on behalf of McMinnville Cooperative Ministries for its energy retrofitting project.

Mark LaLiberte, a renowned building scientist and environmentalist, led a passionate discussion about how green building fits into sustainability for his keynote address.

The date for next year’s event has already been set. It will be held Saturday, April 19.