

EARTH DAY

QUIT CLOWNIN' AROUND

EVENT URGES KIDS TO THINK ABOUT PLANET'S FUTURE



Bill Wagner / The Daily News

Eartha the Clown, who in real life is Marlene Azar of Portland, delights in the antics of her endangered Moluccan cockatoo, Major, at a show for kids during Earth Day festivities at the Cowlitz County Expo Center on Saturday. Also in tow were a tiny lovebird and an opossum.

By Bonnie J. Yocum
THE DAILY NEWS

Farmers' spring garden starts blended with a green Earth Day message for kids at the Cowlitz County Exposition Center on Saturday, as shoppers stocked up on plants and walked their kids through environmental displays.

The Cowlitz Community Farmers Market and an annual Earth Day festival shared space at the fairgrounds, giving hundreds of kids and parents alike the chance to think about keeping Earth green.

Longview Girl Scout Hannah Morgan, 9, headed hungrily into a camp of food vendors after spending two hours handing out free Douglas fir and hemlock saplings.

"I want to go get some cotton candy, an elephant ear, a hot dog and a shake," Hannah said — out of her mother's earshot.

Aside from junk food, recreation for kids included a rock climbing wall, an inflatable bouncing room, and dozens of educational displays on topics such as outdoor recreation, recycling and environmentally friendly automobiles.

Kids squeezed peanut butter onto bare toilet paper rolls, then smushed them in bird seed to make hanging feeders. Others got their hands dirty as they pressed young plants into take-

home pots.

Just after lunch, boys and girls flocked to a show from Eartha, The Ecological Clown.

Crowded around the clown's stage, boys and girls shouted out answers to her environmental magic show.

"Hi everyone, and welcome to Planet Earth," Eartha said. "There's only one Planet Earth, so isn't that a good enough reason to take care of it?"

"YEAHH!" kids yelled.

Before scores of wondering eyes — and with the magic words "Abracadabra alligator" — Eartha turned a handful of feathers into a bright little lovebird. Her 15-year-old endangered Moluccan cockatoo, Major, showed off his imitations of other birds, and she used a rescued animal, Blossom the Awesome 'Possum, to teach kids to respect all wildlife — even critters some people despise.

Lucas Myers, 8, of Longview, said he learned from the Earth Day celebration.

"I need to take care of the earth, and recycle."

One thing Lucas liked best was learning about an unusual kind of pollution.

"There's light pollution, so we can't have telescopes and look into the sky because there's light everywhere."