

# Awareness day aims to define 'green'

BY NOEL LYN SMITH  
NAVAJO TIMES

INDIAN WELLS, Ariz. - Dottie Wilson was trying her skill at hand carding Navajo Churro wool at the demonstration booth during Green Awareness Day, held Friday at Indian Wells Elementary School.

Wilson, of Indian Wells, came to the event to learn about sustainable living and green jobs.

"I heard the word 'green' but didn't realize all that can be considered green," Wilson said while glancing at the information booths that filled the gymnasium floor.

There were booths that focused on developing a green economy on the Navajo Nation and booths with information about changing lifestyles to include environmentally friendly ideas, like how to make compost from common household waste.

"I think I would like to get into that," Wilson said.

Claudia Jackson, coordinator for Navajo Green Jobs, a coalition started in 2008 to help develop green jobs on the Navajo Nation, said there is a problem with people not understanding the term.

For the most part, green jobs means those in renewable and clean-energy industries, like solar and wind, and jobs that contribute to preserve or restore environmental quality.

Helping the public understand the term, along with its benefits, and demonstrating how those ideas can be implemented on Navajo were the reasons the event took place, Jackson said.

She told the audience of about 40 people there are opportunities for Navajos to develop green businesses but the awareness needs to start now, along with encouraging the younger generation to learn about those opportunities.

"They are like the seeds that we want to plant in our young kids, these are opportunities that are available to you," Jackson said.

John Blueyes, a volunteer with the Shiprock Farmers Market and community garden, was distributing information about the market and explaining how to start one in your local area.

The Shiprock Farmers Market



TahNibaa Naataanii, left, shows a local resident an automated wool spinner Nov. 18 during Green Awareness Day at Indian Wells Elementary School. (Times photo - Noel Lyn Smith)

started in 2006 as a way to promote farming in the area and to promote healthy eating.

"Farmers markets are growing because people are wanting local-grown food," Blueyes said. "We want to pay, put money into local economy."

The market also offers access to freshly harvested produce, which is often more nutritious than supermarket produce that is picked early and stored for long periods as it is transported far from where it is grown.

"You can talk to the farmer and he can tell you how he grew it," Blueyes said. "You know its fresh and it's coming directly from the farmer because he picked it today or yesterday."

TahNibaa Naataanii, project director for Diné Bé Iiná Inc., was showing an elderly woman

the automated wool spinner at the organization's booth.

Covering two long tables were coasters, boots, mittens, hats and other items made from Navajo Churro wool, in addition to hand-spun and dyed yarns.

Naataanii shared her experience of green living by telling people that during the summer she herds her sheep in the Chuska Mountains. Because of the plants they eat there, their wool will produce a rich brown color that she will use in her weaving.

As a fifth-generation weaver, she learned these lessons from her parents and grandparents, which shows an example of Navajos living green before it grew into a movement.

"It was a way of life for our people so it's almost natural for our people to turn back to these

lifeways," she said.

Roberto Nutlouis volunteers with Black Mesa Water Coalition and was collecting letters of support for starting a recycling program on the Navajo Nation.

"These types of events are important to educate the people," Nutlouis said.

Jackson said Navajo Green Jobs is planning similar events at Diné College and Teec Nos Pos Chapter early next year.

Other sponsors of the event included Council delegates Elmer P. Begay (Dilkon/Greasewood Springs/Indian Wells/Teesto/White Cone) and Jonathan Nez (Navajo Mountain/Olajato/Shonto/Ts'ah bii Kin), the Sierra Club, Black Mesa Water Coalition and the chapters of Dilkon, Greasewood Springs, Indian Wells, Teesto and White Cone.