

500 Attend 26th Annual Pinelands Short Course at Stockton University

Family-Friendly Presentations Help to Attract More Young People

For Immediate Release; photos attached, captions below

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Galloway Township, NJ - About 500 people - including more children than ever before - attended the 26th annual Pinelands Short Course at Stockton University today to explore the region's unique history, ecology, culture and music.

Finn Duffey, 8, learned how to make a headache remedy by grinding up pine needles, smearing the poultice on an animal skin and tying it to his head during a presentation on Lenni Lenape Living in the Pines by Ginette Day of Burlington County College.

Finn attended with his grandmother, Bonnie Mullock of Cape May, while his mother, Mariah Duffey of Stockton's School of Graduate and Continuing Studies, helped oversee the event. The Short Course is sponsored by the New Jersey Pinelands Commission and was hosted by Stockton for the second straight year.

Day, of BCC's Pinelands Institute for Natural and Environmental Studies, conducted a hands-on session in which attendees ground corn into flour using a hollowed-out tree stump and a branch as mortar and pestle.

She invited the group to travel back 600 years in time to experience how the Lenni Lenape lived, including preparing food, making herbal medicines and playing games with pieces made from stones, deer antlers, pine needles, clam shells and tree bark.

"The Lenni Lenape were probably the first people to hang out at the Jersey Shore. They were nomadic and relied on the natural world for resources," Day said, explaining why they would move from the Delaware River shore, through the Pinelands and to the seashore, depending on the season.

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“The Pinelands were an important place where they could find plants for food and medicine, and animals that provided food, clothing and bones to be made into tools,” Day said.

Many of those attending had been coming to the Pinelands Short Course for years, while others were first-timers.

The Connor family of Sweetwater, NJ represented both kinds of participants.

“We’ve come seven or eight times and we learn something new every time,” said Barbara Connor, referring to herself and husband Kyran. It was a first visit for their son, Eamonn, of Philadelphia.

She said she liked learning about “what’s in your backyard,” or in the case of one course she took, “Fishes of the Mullica River/Great Bay Estuary,” it was learning about “what we are swimming with.”

Eamonn Connor said he thought the Lenni Lenape course he attended was “a great way to expose kids to the Pinelands and their history.”

The new family-friendly track of courses was designed to attract more students from middle school and up, to instill a sense of Pinelands stewardship in new generations.

First-time courses this year included presentations on the Pinelands Jetport, the Jersey Devil and the Origins of New Jersey, Lost Towns of the Pines, Wetlands and Hydrologic Gradients, From the Lens: Learning to Appreciate the Pinelands through Photography, Wilderness Survival Fundamentals, Waste Management/Recycling in the Pinelands, Birding the Pinelands at Stockton, and family-friendly programs on Sea Creatures with Amazing Features, Birding 101: Learning the Basics of Birdwatching and the Lenni Lenape course.

Popular presentations from the past were reprised, including: Pinelands Frogs and Toads, Raptors of New Jersey (with live raptors, another family friendly course), Know the Bear Facts: Black Bears in New Jersey (also family friendly), Dragonflies and Damselflies of the Pinelands, Batsto through the Years, Atlantic White Cedar: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, Pinelands Stream-water Quality and Aquatic Communities, Lure of the Pine Barrens, Estell Manor Park, New Jersey’s Biodiversity: North & South and A Photographic Journey through the Pinelands National Reserve.

Live music was provided by the Thomas Wesley Stern Band and Tunes & Tales.

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Photo credit: Paul Leakan/New Jersey Pinelands Commission

Captions:

John Rokita, principal lab technician at Stockton University, presents “Birding at Stockton.”

Erin Kiefer, a naturalist at the Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge in Medford, NJ, gives a family-friendly presentation on Raptors of New Jersey, which include this barred owl.