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Duke hosts state's National Hunting and Fishing Day

By David Williams
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SENECA — A perfect day to be outdoors greeted more than 1,000 visitors to South Carolina's celebration of National Hunting and Fishing Day on Saturday at Duke Energy's World of Energy in Seneca.

The second celebration to take place in partnership with the celebration at Cohen Campbell Fisheries Center in western Columbia featured 37 exhibitors and presenters with one goal in mind: Get more people outdoors.

Angela Viney of Upstate Forever in Greenville recalled how the first National Hunting and Fishing Day in Columbia drew 800 people.

"Eight hundred must be a magic number," Viney said. "We had 800 last year and in 2006, the Columbia celebration had more than 1,500 visitors. We could surpass that today."

Jason Walls with Duke Energy said that when Viney moved to the Upstate, the plan to have two celebrations took root and is growing faster than kudzu.

"We want to grow the spirit of conservation," Walls said. "This is about getting the young and the young at heart outdoors."

Isabelle Norman, 8, of North Carolina turned out with her father, Bill Norman, and she admired the butterfly garden display of John Turner with the Carolina Butterfly Society, she said.

Turner described how to tag Monarch butterflies either reared in his garden or captured wild, and how to track the majestic fliers to Mexico.

Bill Norman is an associate professor at Clemson University and is conducting a survey that has spread across the country concerning interests in hunting, fishing and the outdoors.

"It's about identifying lot of preconceived attitudes," Bill Norman said. "The stereotypes, the conservationists versus hunters. The survey should be a learning opportunity."

New demonstrations at the World of Energy this year included the Foothills Retrievers and their Labradors plus several displays that included many free products and pamphlets.

Other demonstrations allowed visitors' participation, including air rifle shooting by the 4-H Shooting Sports;

archery by the South Carolina Bow Hunters Association; fishing and kayaking on Lake Keowee; tree stand safety; and games of hide-and-seek with youngsters dressed in camouflage.

More than 200 school children from Pickens and Oconee counties got a sneak preview Friday by early arriving demonstrators. "We were able to show how to give back to conservation," Viney said.

Landon Whitlock, 3, of Six Mile, enjoyed a fishing rod casting game Saturday with his dad, B.J. Whitlock.

B.J. Whitlock said he takes his son fishing and hunting every chance he gets but Landon has more patience when it comes to fishing.

"I try to take him hunting, but it doesn't last long," Whitlock said.

The roots of the national hunting and fishing day recognitions date back to 1972 when President Richard Nixon signed the first proclamation of National Hunting and Fishing Day.

Nixon wrote, "I urge all citizens to join with outdoor sportsmen in the wise use of our natural resources and in insuring their proper management for the benefit of future generations."

Walls said across the country, those words still form the foundation for a celebration of outdoor recreation.

"By encouraging young and old alike to get outside and get active, it is hoped an appreciation of our natural resources will be formed, and every participant will become a vocal supporter of conservation," Walls said.



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