

# Earth Day event draws thousands



Vinni Fluegge, left, and Mortiz Misslbeck, both 5, race solar-powered toy cars through a miniature racetrack at San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz on Saturday during the annual Earth Day celebration.

KEVIN JOHNSON — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

## Celebration showcases work from county nonprofit, municipal entities

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**SANTA CRUZ** » The sun came out and so did the people for the annual Earth Day celebration in

San Lorenzo Park.

The event drew an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 people, said Mary Simmons, waste reduction manager and one of the organizers.

"It's just a chance to celebrate the environment," she said.

The product of a combined effort from the City of Santa Cruz, the county, the Coastal Watershed Council and Ecology Action, the event has a storied history within the county. Though there were celebrations in the

1970s, the event stopped for a number of years before being revived in 2006.

While bands played music in the background, attendees walked down the aisles of the

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PHOTOS BY KEVIN JOHNSON — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Hundreds roam through San Lorenzo Park on Saturday during the annual Earth Day celebration.

## Earth Day

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event listening to nonprofits and municipal agencies pitch ways to be greener.

Kerith Koontz and her son, Isaac, were among the crowd perusing the booths. Koontz said she has brought her kids to the celebration off and on for 10 years, she said.

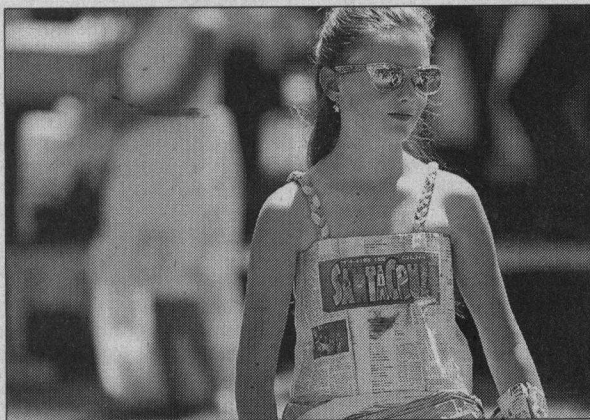
For his part, Isaac was just taking the event in.

"There's a lot of fascinating things like that huge Earth made up of plastic bottles," he said.

One of the things Isaac and his mom discovered were sand timers they could put in their bathroom to reduce the amount of time they showered. The two took a pledge and received a free timer.

"It's so you know how much time you've been in there," he said.

While Koontz said she and her family are already environmentally conscious,



Nicole Christensen models an outfit made from recycled newspaper that was designed by sixth-grader Lanie Andersen, not pictured, at San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz on Saturday during the annual Earth Day celebration.

she usually finds new pieces of information at the event.

"We did really like the low-flow toilet guy," said Koontz, adding that there was much water to be saved by fixing leaky toilets.

One aspect of the event she liked were volunteers at ever trash can guiding people on where to throw their waste.

"You walk up to them and say, 'I don't know which

to throw it in,' and they'll tell you if it's recyclable or compostable," she said.

Among the organizations at the event was Bike Santa Cruz County, which recently changed its name from People Power.

"This is a great place for us to reach these folks and tell them about the resources available," said Amelia Conlen, the nonprofit's director.

The most common question is what are the safest bike routes in the county.

Conlen usually tells them about the bike map put out by the county's Regional Transportation Commission.

"I think this event epitomizes Santa Cruz," she said. "We have at least a dozen nonprofits here today showcasing all the work they're doing in our county."

Trinn Reddall brought her two daughters, ages 6 and 4, to the event.

"It's just a nice thing to do," she said. "They don't really get the concept of Earth Day. They just think it's fun."

But the more than a dozen nonprofits at the event are mindful of the impact they have on kids, Reddall said.

"Some of the organizations put on really good activities for the kids that teach them things," she said. "Things that make them think about how they're tiny actions can be positive or negative for the Earth."