

Skate shop, environmental project create joint event

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The skater-owned--and-operated Enchantment Skate Shop organized its first Skate Jam since the pandemic began. It was held Oct. 16. It was part skateboard competition-part environmental fundraiser.

Husband and wife, Jeremy and Cecely Todacheenie, the owners of Enchantment Skate Shop at 201 E. Hwy. 66 and organizers of Skate Jam have been involved in the community since before the new skatepark opened in 2018.

"We've helped raise money for the Gallup Skatepark and helped start events like this," Cecely Todacheenie said.

"We just try to do everything we can to be productive skateboarders and do an event every chance that we can for our skate community," Jeremy Todacheenie added.

The Skate Jam, which hosted approximately 70 participants, was organized around four divisions of skateboarders: female, beginner, intermediate, and advanced, and also featured a musical performance from The Juggernaut.

In organizing the event, the Todacheenies joined with local business sponsors including Scott's Food Stand, Maria's Restaurant, and Glenn's Bakery, as well as companies whose products are sold at their shop. The sponsors provided prizes for the top three finishers in each of the four divisions.

The couple also teamed up with an environmental project called We Grow Eco.

We Grow Eco is a grassroots effort initiated by Chauncey Foster and Noah Mertz.

The two have been partnering with local communities to do clean-ups and food walks as they

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make their way across the country picking up trash and recording data for potential use in future environmental work. So far their route has taken them from Virginia Beach to Gallup and will eventually end in California.

Foster and Mertz wanted to partner with Skate Jam in part because the community building the Todacheenies are facilitating is also at the core of We Grow Eco. A mutual friend connected them.

“We decided to work with [We Grow Eco] and thought it was a good idea to have them set up [a table] at Skate Jam,” Cecely Todacheenie said. “Keeping the community clean is something we are trying to support and help promote at the skatepark,”

“The core [of We Grow Eco] is to promote sustainable and coalescent relationships in the communities we go through,” Foster said. “We can build relations with one another while also doing things that make a difference. Picking up a piece of trash is an example of a small action that we can do to make a difference.”

Foster and Mertz hope that building these relationships in the community and taking steps to clean up litter will lead people to ask questions about how humans should approach and interact with the environment. In the end, Foster and Mertz hope to use this project as a starting point for a nonprofit that would partner with schools to educate students about the environment and require students to pick up litter as part of the curriculum.

New Mexico is a potential location for this nonprofit.

“We are looking to build a youth program, so that we can get folks from the pueblos and from Santa Fe and Albuquerque out doing conservation work and kind of interacting with each other in a cross-cultural effort,” Foster said.

Foster and Mertz would like to see their involvement with Skate Jam continue in future years.

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Regardless of where they wind up, Mertz says community involvement will remain a priority.

“Wherever we land we want to be partnering with the city, getting volunteers, and running fun events. We want to continue doing community cleanup events and make it about civilian science, in addition to a community unifying opportunity,” Mertz said.

For now, Foster and Mertz are just grateful people like the Todacheenies recognize the importance of community-building and the environment and were willing to let them join the Gallup skate community for a day.

By Rachel Pfeiffer
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