

Cow chips, compost and raptors

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Lots of stuff for kids to do on the farm on Earth Day

By Lisa Reisman

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GUILFORD » At 1 p.m. Saturday, April 23, a heifer named Bessie will enter the sheep pasture of Guilford's Dudley Farm Museum. She will graze on the grass for a while and then, when nature calls, determine the winner of the Cow Chip Raffle.

The performance by Bessie, also known as Easton, according to her owners at Half Mile Acre Farms in North Guilford, is among the activities

planned for Earthfest, a daylong celebration of Earth Day on the grounds of the Dudley Farm Museum.

As the brainchild of North Guilford Nursery School (NGNS) Board members Amy Healy and Amanda Waggoner, the event, which will include live music, food trucks and an assortment of homegrown and handmade items from Dudley Farm market vendors, will focus on the next generation, according to Waggoner.

"Our children are the future," Healy said. "It's never too early to provide them with the knowledge and tools to sustain and protect the earth."

Hence, the opportunity for kids, among other activities, to transform

milk cartons into bird feeders and egg cartons into seed trays; to decorate their own tote bags; and make wind chimes from clam shells.

There will also be a live beehive to learn about making honey from Pond's Honey in Guilford; a recycling station to sort out what is recyclable, compostable, and trash; and demonstrations on container gardening by Page Hardware and countertop composting by Dudley Farm.

Not to mention an hourlong program on raptors presented by Rose Crisci of Guilford's Blue Moon Raptors, whose mission is to rehabilitate ill, injured, and orphaned birds

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PHOTO BY BARB HAMMARLUND

Bessie, aka Easton, from Half Acre Farm, featured performer in the Cow Chip Raffle at Earthfest at the Dudley Farm Museum, Saturday, April 23.

Farm

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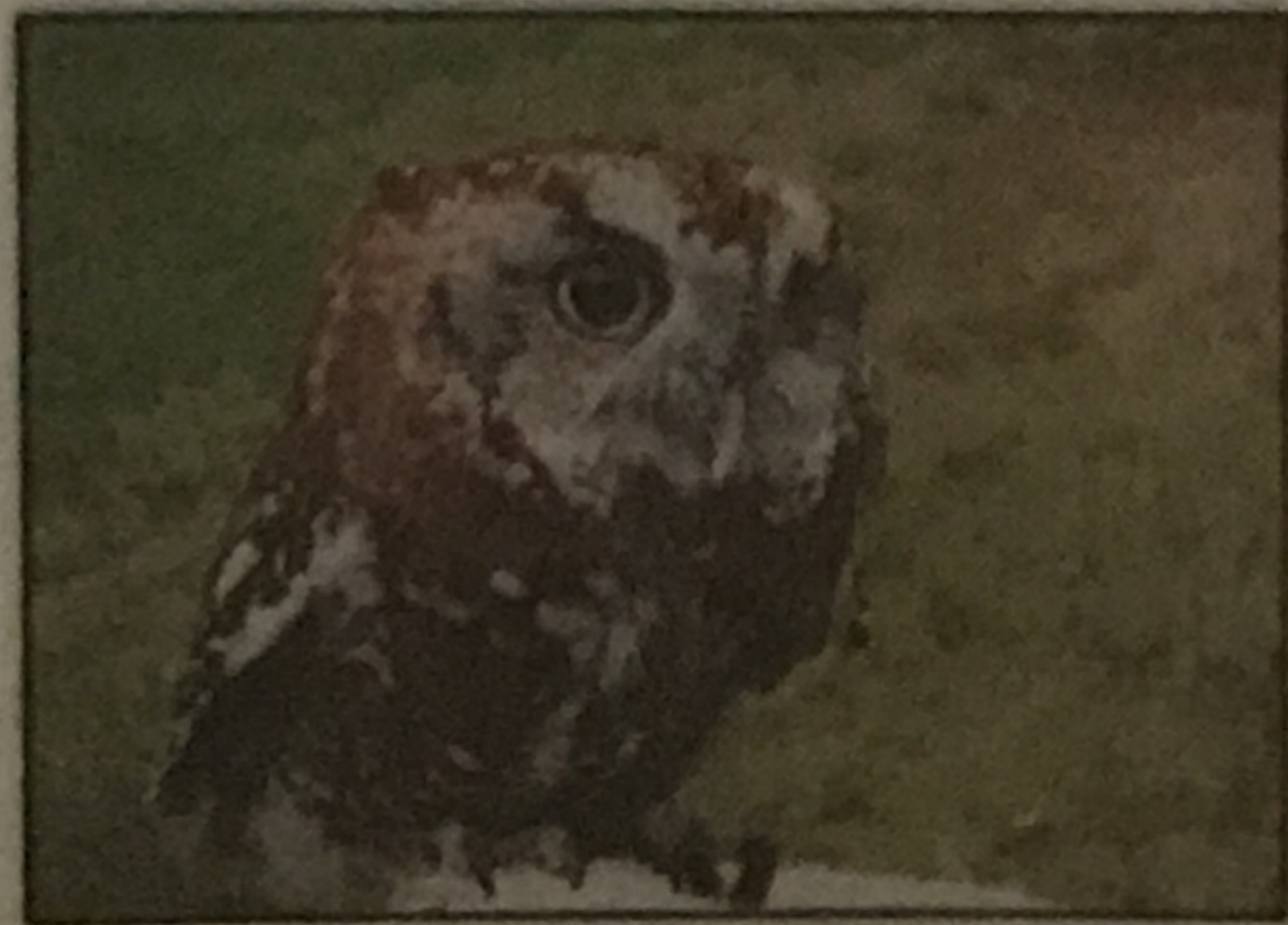
of prey, or raptors, and return them to their natural habitat.

The program, which benefits Dudley Farm's Big Barn Project, will feature Onyx, a barred owl, who fell out of his nest as a baby, and red-tailed hawk Aviana, who suffered injuries to her eye and wing when hit by a car, as well as Myles, a broad winged hawk, and northern saw-whet owl Fyn, both of whom were struck by vehicles.

"It's vital for young audiences to hear the impact we make on our environment," Crisci said, noting that the raptors have been deemed protected species because they help control animal populations like mice, rats and prairie dogs, and are an integral part of keeping natural systems in balance.

Raptors aren't just crucial for the environment. "It's amazing when children who haven't been exposed to these creatures see how incredible they are, how fast they fly, how beautiful it is to watch them soar," Crisci said. "If I can reach one child on why raptors matter, it's worth it."

Likewise, in another sense, the Cow Chip Raffle. The idea is simple, according to Healy. The sheep pasture will be divided into square-foot parcels. Rights to each parcel are being sold for \$10. The person who has bought



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Fyn, a northern saw-whet owl, a species practically bursting with attitude, will be featured at the Raptor Program presented by Blue Moon Raptors as part of Earthfest at the Dudley Farm Museum on Saturday, April 23.



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Donna King of Balsam+Berry teaches children about seedlings courtesy of Vaiuso Farm, as part of North Guilford Nursery School's Farm to Preschool curriculum.

the parcel on which Bessie deposits the cow chip will win \$1,000. It's only fitting that the remainder of the proceeds from the raffle will go toward the NGNS Farm to Preschool curriculum, a program conceptualized by Jerbi and Donna King of Balsam+Berry in Guilford.

It's a program designed to teach the NGNS students about keeping it local and appreciating the farms around them, as well as to encourage the practice of sustainable living, according to Jerbi.

"The kids plant their own gardens, seeing them grow from seed to harvest," she said. "The more they see the vegetables and where they're coming from, the more they want to eat vegetables."

Same with a llama from a family farm that visited the school. "They learned about fiber and creating wool and yarn," she said.

There are two main goals of the program, according to

Jerbi: "We want our students to be able to say 'I know where that comes from and why it's a healthy choice for me,' and also 'I've done that before, so I can do that now.'"

If Bessie's contributions to the Cow Chip Raffle help fund a greenhouse or tools for the program, so much the better.

Earthfest, presented by North Guilford Nursery School, will run from 10 am to 3 p.m. on Saturday, April 23 on the grounds of The Dudley Farm Museum, 2351 Durham Rd, Guilford. For information on Cow Chip Raffle tickets, call the school at 203-457-0808.

The Raptor Program will take place at 1:30 p.m. in the Munger Barn. Tickets, \$3 children, \$7 adults, and \$15 families are available at The Dudley Farm Museum and the North Guilford Nursery School. For information on Blue Moon Raptors, visit bluemoonraptors.com.