

Local Master Naturalists Participate in Rockdale Earth Day Celebration

By Sue Ann Kendall

Earth Day was celebrated a day early this year, as the El Camino Real Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program shared information with the public on April 21 at the Rockdale Community Center. The event ran from 10-2 pm. The volunteer Master Naturalists were joined by Todnechia Mitchell and Tyler Lawson, representatives from the USDA office in Cameron, and by Sean Wall, author of *The Cycles of Foraging – A Book of Days*.

Members of the El Camino Real chapter put together a nature and conservation display, including exhibits on water conservation, bees and other pollinators, trees, landscaping to attract wildlife, and Earth Day. Sean Wall

shared some of his nature-themed art, along with information on gathering food from your surroundings. Wall also provided samples of delicious beautyberry brownies and sumac tea. The USDA team gave out rain gauges, educational materials and fun giveaways for kids, like sunglasses. The Post Oak Savannah Groundwater Conservation District donated materials and tote bags.

For the young set were tables for: face painting by the talented Phyllis Shuffield and Dorothy Mayer; a butterfly coloring and crafts area staffed by Barbara Paschall, Darlene (Anglen) Reynolds, and Tina Foster; a place to learn about and pledge to save water led by Mike and Joyce Conner; and a beautiful nature tree display with hand-made ornaments made by Cathy Johnson and her daughter Rosie. The ornaments were given to any participant who

visited at least four exhibits. They were aided by Liz Lewis.

For all ages were tables with information about the Master Naturalist program (Sherry Colley), the ways to Take Care of Texas (Lisa Milewski), how to landscape for wildlife (Donna Lewis and Debbi Harris) and our pollinator friends (Larry Kocian).

A highlight of our Earth Day celebration was the chance to share Earth Day information on radio station KXRT 98.5. Jen Coleman (a Master Gardener) spoke at length with Chapter President Phyllis Shuffield and Vice-President and Earth Day Coordinator Donna Lewis about the importance of Earth Day as well as the Master Naturalist program. Coleman also interviewed Sean Wall about how to find edible plants in and around Milam County. Sue Ann Kendall also served as media coverage.

Officially, Earth Day fell on Sunday, April 22 this year. According to *earthday.org*, it, “marks the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970. On April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans took to the streets, parks, and auditoriums to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment in massive coast-to-coast rallies...Earth Day 1970 achieved a rare political alignment, enlisting support from Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, city slickers and farmers, tycoons and labor leaders. By the end of that year, the first Earth Day had led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts.”

Texas Master Naturalists are sponsored by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. The El Camino Real Chapter has meetings on the

second Thursday of every month. See txmn.org/elcamino for more information.

Photo Captions:

1. Children working at the butterfly and treasure box craft table at the Rockdale Earth Day celebration.
2. Mike Conner of the El Camino Chapter at his water conservation exhibit.
3. Hand-made nature ornaments with charms, along with fruit and cookies, were available for Earth Day activity participants.
4. Jen Coleman interviews author and artist Sean Wall, of Bryan, for KRXT radio.