

It's arts and crafts galore

Season under way and don't forget fixins

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Cell phone sack decorated with butterfly buttons at the Seacoast Artisans Fine Arts & Crafts Holiday Show in Portsmouth: \$15.

"Peppa burga" at St. Raphael's Holiday Bazaar in Kittery, Maine: \$2.50.

Pound of fudge at Eliot United Methodist Church's Holiday House Christmas Fair in Eliot, Maine: \$4.

Spending Saturday shopping at local craft fairs: Pric— actually, let's settle on \$1.25. It all goes to a good cause.

There were at least nine craft fairs kicking off the holiday season on Saturday from North Hampton and Exeter up to Rollinsford and Kennebunk, Maine.

Like people, craft fairs tend to come with their own personality traits and specialties.

You could call the 10th annual Seacoast Artisans show Posh Spice.

Held for the first time at the Frank Jones Center instead of Portsmouth High School, the show still included a bake sale to benefit New Franklin Parent Teacher Organization.

After a \$5 admission fee, visitors could shop under chandeliers through 85 artisan booths in three rooms while listening to instrumental Christmas music by Ed Gerhard.

The show was held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. but by 10:30 a.m. it was crowded to the point of difficulty squeezing by other shoppers.

Each guest was given a list of crafters and booth numbers, and Judy Ward of New Castle was spotted circling her favorite booths of the fair.

"They usually have it at the high school and I think this is much nicer," Ward said. "At the high school it was very congested. This is more open."

She likes this particular annual event because the art is juried and high quality.

"I like this lady here," she said of booth 62, Barbara Boxer of Tribal Thrills, who created little pieces of art that make music when you blow through them.

Ward also singled out Monica Foley of Blackberry Hill Designs. "She takes recycled Scrabble tiles and puts designs on the back," Ward said. She ended up paying \$7 for two.

As Richard Maina of Kittery Point waited for his wife, Nancy, to buy a Christmas ornament, he held a bag with two previously purchased items: A \$90 Santa from Collins Gift Shop and a scarf of some kind.

He's not much of a craft fair shopper — "I just follow her" — but they usually go to "the bigger ones."



Shoppers peruse more than 80 artisans' booths in one of three rooms at the 10th annual Fine Arts and Crafts Holiday Show at the Frank Jones Center on Route 1 in Portsmouth on Saturday. Scott Yates syates@seacoastonline.com

"I think it's just the value and the quality of the artwork," Maina said. "Some of the people who go to (smaller fairs) don't want to spend a lot of money."

To get to the second and third rooms, shoppers had to walk through the kitchen. But in that second room was a snack bar offering rotini and meatballs for \$4, chicken tenders and fries for \$5 and pizza for \$3.

The New Franklin PTO bake sale was held in the hallway between the first room and the kitchen.

Mary Morin, volunteer coordinator, said they were hoping for between \$500 and \$1,000. They were already doing steady business within an hour of opening.

Eliot United Methodist Church was also seeing big food business on Saturday, with their \$1.50 corn chowder selling out.

Jeanette Paul said at church recently she put out an impassioned call for parishioners to bring fudge to the fair. They did — in spades — and she ended up taking in \$173.25 just from that candy table.

"We had a good turnout today," said Gladys Horning who, like Paul is a member of the "faith circle" that organized the event. "I think it's the quality that we do and the price."

The church has been at its Dow Highway location since 1984 and they've been holding the fair since sometime before that.

In addition to fudge they had a "cookie walk" with 25 different varieties, as well as embroidered crafts and other homemade items.

As Methodists, they said they are not allowed to hold drawings or any other games of chance.

Horning, who donated embroidered items for the sale, said they could all just give money straight to the church, but that wouldn't be any fun.

"It's the fellowship," she said.

Over in Kittery, Voila Blackwood said they've been holding the St. Raphael's Annual Bazaar for at least 19 years.

"We had a good steady crowd," she said. A lot of people get there early for the silent auction baskets, she said, as well as to enjoy the fixins. "Our Knights (of Columbus) have a great reputation for their food."

They also offered a "nearly new" section behind the main church. Outside was a box of jars available for \$5.

Inside were various knickknacks and items such as pots, pans and accessories for \$2; plates for 25 cents and mugs for 10 cents.

Volunteer Vicki Wentworth said all of the items were donated by parishioners. At the end of the sale, they would give **Fair Tide Thrift Store in Kittery** a chance to take anything they want. And the rest would go to other charitable organizations.

Nancy Brown was considering buying a teacup as her daughter, Sarah, was having a covered dish wrapped. "It's fun," Brown said of craft fair shopping.

She walked over the bridge from Portsmouth with her daughter and granddaughters, Daria, 10, Auden, 8, and Claire, 6, for some "family time."

It turned into some Seacoast time too.

"In the economic times that we live in," Brown said, "it's important to do things to support the community."