



*"Honeyfest - The buzz about a sweet event in Lithopolis"*

*Article by Christine Shaw, July/August 2009*

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*Featuring the beautiful Wagnall's Memorial grounds, arts and crafts, food, gifts, live music and, of course, honey, Honeyfest proves to be a perfect summer festival for the entire family.*

*Enjoy beautifully manicured grounds, live music, and fine quality arts and crafts while learning about the benefits of beekeeping at the 2009 Lithopolis Honeyfest. The daylong event celebrates National Honey Month with activities that focus on honey and the honeybee including demonstrations, conversation, shopping and tasty treats.*

*Located about 10 miles [north] of Lancaster, Lithopolis is home to the Wagnall's Memorial grounds featuring a Tudor-Gothic style building. Its most recent claim to fame is being host to one of only three honey festivals in the United States, and the only one in Ohio.*

*The Honeyfest features art, food, music and gift items all centered on the theme of honey or flowers used to make honey. Winding through old-fashioned brick walkways, visitors buzz like bees as they peruse vendors featuring beeswax gift items and handcrafted art items. The beauty and scent of the products produced from nature grace more than 30 booths.*

*Jason and Cathy Pratt of Lithopolis were among the nearly 5,000 visitors to last year's festival. Jason says, "The Wagnall's Library is a cool backdrop for the scene. The food is good and the gardens are really nice. It's just a nice afternoon." Cathy especially enjoyed the art and other items for sale.*

*The festival is more than just vendors and shopping, though. The organizers strive to educate the community about the importance of honeybees to the environment. "We love what the theme is," says Ginger Brenning, event organizer. "There just something about this cause," she says with conviction. "It's a festival with heart."*

*"I like seeing the bees," says Andrew Toller who spent quite a bit of time talking with beekeeper Jason Mulhauser. Jason explains to Andrew where the queen bee is and what is happening in the enclosure that is on display. About one third of the vegetables are pollinated by the honeybee, Jason explains to a group of visitors. "And, all almonds are pollinated by honey bees."*

*Beekeepers appreciate every opportunity to teach the community about the crucial role that the honeybees play in the environment. Apiculture, the science and art of beekeeping, is an important part of the Honeyfest. "We have the involvement of honeybee trade associations and see this event as a component in preserving apiculture, not just in Ohio, but nationwide and globally," Ginger says.*

"Our role is to get people to keep bees," states Ron Hoopes, president of the Ohio State Beekeepers Association. "We provide training for current beekeepers and we recruit new beekeepers." With honey from around the world, Ron and other beekeepers provide samples of the different fragrances and flavors of honey. "We have honey from Kenya, Greece, Alaska, Southern Orange Blossom, and even sour wood honeys, says Dan Riggs who is helping at the honey tasting and education table. Educational displays and various demonstrations provide the opportunity for those interested in beekeeping to learn about how to get started while visiting the Honeyfest.

"It's top notch. It has been amazing. I am very impressed," says Rachel Bryson, 2008 American Honey Princess. The princess encourages the consumption of honey and educates the public about beekeeping. Everyone at the festival from artisans and beekeepers to vendors has a passion about honey.

Like the most passionate, is Arnold Crabtree, better known as "The Bee Man." Imagine hearing the buzz of bees in the air. The Bee Man enters a screened in gazebo and places the queen bee under his chin. The buzz of bee's wings fills the air as the bees swarm creating a beard on Arnold's chin and chest. He says the bees do not want to sting and they will not if they do not feel threatened.

In addition to vendors and education, the Lithopolis Honeyfest offers arts and crafts for the family. Plein air artists set up their working studio on the grounds and give demonstrations of their work. There are also crafts for the kids and the Hometown Buffet Bee greets guests as live music fills the air.

"I am very pleasantly surprised at the varied activities, displays, quality artwork, and educational activities," says Sandra Packer, one of five plein air artists who shared their talents with guests. "Many of the kids stop by to watch me paint. As a retired art teacher, I delight in their comments and conversation," Sandy shares.

Attending the festival is a treat for the whole family, but participating in the event is also beneficial. Shaun Quakkelaar of Q Card Plus agrees. Shaun paints flowers on cards, ornaments, glasses, plates and more. His elegant pieces fit right in with the bee and pollination theme. "I searched the Internet for art fairs and found this one," Shaun says. "The people have been so nice and helpful and the customers are receptive to my work."

Whether you are interested in beekeeping, shopping, or just enjoy a day of fun for the family with music, art, food and crafts, there is something for everyone at the Lithopolis Honeyfest.

In addition to freelance writing and photography, Christine Shaw serves as the public relations coordinator at Ohio University's Zanesville campus. She enjoys spending time with her daughters, Haley and Elloria, as they visit educational and entertaining activities around the region.