

Rock & Shop Market supports local arts and crafts businesses

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Food trucks, local bands and shopping sounds like a perfect way to spend a Saturday afternoon.

The Rock & Shop Market, an event that brings together local makers and crafters, happened April 5 in the Durham Armory. But don't worry, this event will be back this year in November or December.

Michelle Smith, creator of the Rock & Shop, said when she came up with the event 10 years ago there were not many outlets for artists and crafters to sell their products.

"I've learned that I'm really passionate about helping local artists and crafters," Smith said.

The Rock & Shop brings a community of creative people together.

Smith said she invited about 90 vendors to this past event. "Locally made is on everyone's radar," Smith said. "It's something that is becoming more and more popular."

Kimberly Thigpen, owner of The Bath Place, said this was her fifth time selling at the Rock & Shop.

Thigpen said she loves the atmosphere of the Rock & Shop. "It has become my favorite event," she said.

Thigpen owns a shop in Rocky Mount that sells bath products, but is considering opening a second shop in downtown Durham because she loves the environment of Durham so much.

Illustrator Edgar Cabrera, co-owner of An Open Sketchbook, has been doing the Rock & Shop for the past two years with his co-owner and wife, Suzanne.

"We like the Rock & Shop because we get to see customers'



The Rock & Shop Market, est. 2004, brought a lot of traffic to local businesses Saturday. The 6-hour event showcased more than 75 emerging artisans and makers from the Southeast and beyond. (Staff photo)

reaction to the products and we get to meet face to face," Cabrera said.

Marcia Spencer, owner of Keechii, said this was her first time selling at the Rock & Shop.

Spencer said she finds the material to make her bags from local sellers.

"I've been sewing since I was little," she said. "I made one of these bags for myself and got a lot of compliments so I decided to sell them."

"There is really good traffic and music here. Art and culture wise, Durham is a good area."

Lysandra Weber, owner of Geekchicfashion, has been selling her products at the Rock & Shop for the past two years.

"I like the vendors," she said. "They are all unique and interesting."

Weber sews clothing, such as pencil skirts and scarves. "I've been sewing since I was nine – my great aunt taught me," she said.

"Durham is up-and-coming," Weber said. "There are lots of interesting people."

Ettrick Coley, husband of Tiffany Coley, who is the owner of Tiffany Coley Handcrafted Artisan Jewelry, showed support for his wife by going when she was unable to make it.

"She is always looking for opportunities to show her work," Coley said. "And you have to support your spouse."

Marcus Hawley, owner of Natty Neckware, a bowtie company from Durham, said this was his first year as a vendor at the Rock & Shop.

"[The Rock & Shop] brings a diverse crowd that's not seen too often," Hawley said.

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Rock & Shop creator Michelle Smith is the owner of her Cary-based store, Gather.



Kimberly Thigpen, The Bath Place, takes advantage of local and regional sales.



Marcus Hawley of Natty Neckware saw a variety of new customers at his booth.

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Hawley makes his bowties with fabric he buys locally.

"I'm more of a local kind of guy," he said.

"I find inspiration from people I meet," Hawley said. "That's why this event is important."

The people who come to the Rock & Shop have just as much fun as the vendors.

Jessie Brinson, Rock & Shop attendee, said this was her first time going to the event.

"So far I like the diversity, energy and people," she said.

Brinson said she thinks she will come back.

"I think this is important," Brinson said. "Durham has a keen eye for being local and I like that."

Joy Snyder, an attendee from Durham, said it was the perfect day to support local business.

"It's really good for the economy to support local designers," she said.

Melanie Grossman, who has lived in Durham for 10 years, echoed Snyder's remark.

"I like being able to walk around and look at the different art and [products]," she said.

Grossman said events like this are important because they share a sense of community.

Smith said it is fun to make this event happen, by inviting vendors, hiring musicians and a DJ, and getting food trucks to come out during lunch.

"Durham really gets the Rock & Shop," she said.

Smith also said supporting local businesses and people helps the economy.

"When you spend your money locally, there is three-fold benefit," Smith said. "You're benefitting a local business, so you're helping your neighbor, your neighbor is paying taxes on that which is going back to your community, and you're creating a more vibrant community because you're more connected to the products, the people."

"There's just something really interesting that happens when you have something that becomes a tactile good that's in your home and you can attach it to the person who made it and you understand the story of it. It just takes on a whole new level of awareness about consumption and goods and I just think that's really important."

For more information:
Visit Rock & Shop Market's website for ways to get involved, become a vendor, or shop from local artisans.

www.rockandshopmarket.com