

Reduce, reuse, expand?



Four-year-old Eloise Thompson has her face painted with the “Princess” design at The Scrap Exchange’s 25th anniversary event on April 16. (Staff photo by Bradley Saacks)

The Scrap Exchange celebrates 25 years

Bradley Saacks
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Welcome to Ann May Woodward’s “alternative universe.”

The executive director of The Scrap Exchange, a reuse artistic smorgasbord at 2050 Chapel Hill Road by the Lakewood Shopping Center, couldn’t help but be happy with the somewhat chaotic, yet consistently sustainable scene that surrounded her on April 16.

The Scrap Exchange celebrated its 25th anniversary with its all-day “DIY Fest” — and constant talk of plans to purchase 80,000 square feet in the next-door Lakewood Shopping Center to create a reuse arts district.

Amid the mural painters, soccer players and trumpeters, Woodward

could not hold back her excitement about the ongoing festival or the incoming arts district.

“We are all trained to be consumers in America ... this is an alternative universe,” she said.

“As opposed to going out and buying the thing you want, we want to show you make that yourself,” she said. “And once you become a creator instead of a consumer, your entire life changes.”

The Scrap Exchange has produced a lot of creators over its 25-year history. The nonprofit was founded

by a small group of people looking to give Durham a place for reused, sustainable materials.

The organization was originally housed at a donated space in Northgate Mall, and then moved in 2000 to a former tobacco warehouse in the Central Park district in downtown Durham. The Scrap Exchange moved to its current location when the ceiling of the renovated warehouse partially collapsed in 2011, and the city condemned the building.

Now, as The Scrap Exchange continues to expand its services — offering everything from children’s reuse classes to drive-in movies played on the building’s outside wall to more than 140 featured artists’ galleries — the expected \$2.5 million purchase of vacant Lakewood mall space is only going to let the sustainable vibes flow even more.

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- Ann May Woodward,
The Scrap Exchange executive director

responsibility and community through reuse. I think this new space will be very emblematic of this mission,” said Woodward, who is an artist herself.

Woodward said she plans to sign the purchase agreement on May 12.

The festival embodied this mission. The Scrap Exchange Marketing Coordinator Gabrielle Ocampo said the non-profit hoped

for more than 500 participants, and after just one hour, more than 100 people were already painting, pressing and reusing.

“I mean you can just see how many people are filing through here,” she said, as she walked by a couple repainting an outside mural.

She said there were 44 vendors, artists and design center all-stars who taught attendees everything from tumbling used mosaics to pressing linoleum prints.

Kevin McLaughlin, a Scrap Exchange board member, said he is able to see the direct impact the organization has on the community because he lives in the neighborhood.

McLaughlin, a former policy and communications specialist for the Environmental Protection Agency, said he was drawn to sustainability mission of the organization, as well

as the communal feel.

“It’s pretty magical,” he said. “I think it’s that everyone can bring something to the table and create with, what to many people, is junk. Each person has their own brand of creativity, and it’s great to see it all come together.”

Of course, for all of The Scrap Exchange’s success, Woodward is still striving for more. Last year, the organization deferred 140,000 tons of waste from landfills — an enormous amount for the size of the operation like The Scrap Exchange — but could not stop the other 10 million tons of waste that was added to landfills in North Carolina last year.

“This is a grassroots group to reduce waste in Durham, and we are going to keep at it and keep on our mission,” she said.

The Scrap Exchange is set to buy 80,000 square feet of vacant Lakewood shopping district space to implement a reuse arts district.
(Staff photo by Bradley Saacks)

25th Anniversary Celebrations

DIY Fest

When: April 16, 2016 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Where: 2050 Chapel Hill Rd.

Boot Camp

When: June 14 - 17

Where: 2050 Chapel Hill Rd.

The Great Create Race

When: TBA*

Where: TBA

Smashfest

When: TBA

Where: TBA

Swap-O-Rama-Rama

When: Feb. 13, 2016 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Where: 2050 Chapel Hill Rd.

*Find more info at scrapexchange.org.

