

Raging Rivers Mushroom Hunt About "Being a Part of Something" for Hunters

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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GRAFTON - Many vendors and mushroom hunters came out to Raging Rivers on Saturday, April 20, 2024, for the fourth annual Great Mushroom Hunt.

Jessie Hayes, who organized the event, said the day was “pretty good” and an exciting chance to welcome people to the water park. Attendees enjoyed a vendor fair and car cruise in addition to the hunt. But for many, the day was about community as much as it was about morels.

“I’ve been doing this since I was a kid with my uncle and my dad,” said Barbara Esterlen. “It’s not just about the mushrooms, either. It’s about going out, meeting the community and just getting some exercise and all around having a nice active life.”

Esterlen’s entire family had joined her for a day of mushroom hunting. Her sister, Jerry Lynn Myers, said that she had driven over an hour to attend the Raging Rivers Great Mushroom Hunt. Myers said that she was excited to share the experience with her family as well as the larger community of mushroom hunters in the Riverbend region.

“I love mushroom hunting. Knowing this is such a big community of people being out here together and going out in the woods, being a part of something so big and exciting — it’s just the thrill of being out here with so many people doing this,” Myers said. “When we first started doing this, it wasn’t something that was so big and full of people. It was just our family. But to see so many people gathered together doing this and making such a big debacle and knowing that this is a fourth annual thing here, knowing that it’s just become so big, I just think that’s so exciting.”

For people like Esterlen and Myers, the Raging Rivers hunt was a chance to enjoy a family tradition in a new setting. They were excited about hunting on new ground and sharing the experience with more people.

Many vendors were present to share information about their businesses and organizations. Some, including Jeremy Wright with [The Farmed Mushroom](#), had mushroom-themed items to share with attendees.

“What I do is I supply at-home cultivation supplies and culinary mushrooms if you want to eat them at home,” Wright explained. “I came last year. Last year I was just kind of starting out, in the biz of things, and a couple of my coworkers told me about this, so I signed up. It’s a great crowd, great people, and it’s a good exposure event, so I like to get out here.”

At the end of the hunt, Raging Rivers awarded prizes to two lucky winners. Andrew Thegley found the most mushrooms with 32 total. He also found the biggest mushroom, which measured 8.5 inches. Ron Stewart was recognized for finding the smallest mushroom at two centimeters.

For more information about Raging Rivers and their events, visit their [official website at RagingRivers.com](#). Hayes added that they are still looking to hire a few positions for the summer. Check out [RagingRivers.com/Job-Board](#) for more information.



