

## **Conservation District Celebrates 65th Anniversary**

PINE GROVE — The Schuylkill Conservation District celebrated its 65th anniversary Sunday with festivities at Sweet Arrow Lake County Park.

Since its founding in 1955 by Dr. James S. Shadle, the district has evolved from an having an emphasis on soil conservation to one of all natural resource conservation efforts.

Among its efforts today are erosion and sediment control, watershed protection, abandoned mine land remediation, environmental education and farmland conservation planning.

Jenna St. Clair, district manager, said the district began as an all-volunteer organization but currently as 14 staff members as well as a host of volunteers.

In celebration of the growth and success of the district, St. Clair said the birthday bash was planned with something for everyone from young children to adults.

David Lubinsky and his son, David Lubinsky Jr., both of Port Carbon, came to enjoy a day out. Lubinsky's wife, Stephanie, works for the district and was busy while her son took the time to fill specially designed pens with colored sand.

The sand art pens were one of many activities available to youngsters who were each presented with a bag containing stickers, a seed planting kit and more.

"This place is awesome," Lubinsky Jr. said while frolicking around the table that held bins of colored sand.

Schuylkill County Commissioner Gary Hess was on hand as well. He said the work done by the district is essential.

"It is very important to take care of your natural resources," Hess said. "We have to preserve the land we have."

As a county commissioner Hess, said he has been a board member with the conservation district for nine years and has watched it become stronger every year.

That, he said, is because of the people involved and their dedication, both staff members and volunteers.

"It's in their heart, you can see they care," Hess said.

While singer-songwriter KJ Reimensnyder-Wagner sang in the background, Adrian Guido, his wife, Brooke and their daughters, Isabella, 6, and Amelia, 2, enjoyed games and activities geared for children.

Brooke Guido said the family saw the event was being held and decided to give the children something fun to do for the day.

"We wanted to get the kids out," she said. "It's definitely better than sitting in the house."

One of the highlights of the celebration was the presentation of the Schuylkill Conservation District 2020 Conservation Award Winners. St. Clair said the awards are usually presented in a separate ceremony but this year it was decided to make it part of the birthday celebration.

Jim Eisenhart Jr., also known as Hiker Jim E, was named Volunteer of the Year for his work in promoting hiking and trails in the county.

Other awards were Educator of the Year, Janice Blair of Blue Mountain Elementary East; Professional of the Year, Chris Bentz with Alfred Benesch & Co.; Media Conservation Award, Alfredo Mercuri, who hosts a podcast titled "Around the Coal Region Campfire;" Forest Stewardship Award, the Stewardship Crew at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary; Conservation Organization of the Year, Berks Nature; Conservation Service Award-Business, Clauser Environmental LLC; Conservation Service Award-Public, Charlie Mull with

Schuylkill County Trout Unlimited; Youth Conservationist of the Year, Maddison Quick, a student at Mahanoy Area High School; and the Dr. James S. Shadle Conservation Farm of the Year, Hope Hill Lavender Farm.