

Girls Makers Market Debuts at Wilder's Quarry House in Orinda



SHELLY SWANEGAN HAMALIAN

Fifty girls participated in **Lamorinda's first Girls Maker's Market** at Wilder's Quarry House, selling handmade items to over 400 excited shoppers and supporters.

By GILLIAN JUDGE
Contributing Writer

On a recent Sunday afternoon at Orinda Wilder's Quarry House, 50 girls aged 5-13 waited, buzzing with muffled excitement, for the clock to turn two. They stood behind tables laden with their handmade wares – everything from beeswax lip balm to origami animals, from sparkle slime to potted plants, and homemade jewelry to custom velvet cargo pants.

Lined up outside the doors of the large, hacienda-style building was a queue of eager shoppers – friends, family and community members – that totaled 400 over the two-hour event. At the appointed time, the doors opened for Lamorinda's first Girls Makers Market, starting what is likely to become a twice-yearly and fast-growing tradition.

"The community response has far exceeded my expectations," says event founder Roxanne Davis, an Orinda resident, entrepreneur and mother of two girls. Her daughters, Christophe and Sophie, had recently sold \$200 worth of origami by

spontaneously setting up at a nearby farmers market. "I asked the Lamorinda Families Facebook group if other mothers had daughters who were running businesses or were interested in doing so, and I expected a handful of responses. In fact, I had more than 100 responses right away."

What resulted was a spinoff Facebook group with 130 members and an event where the number of interested girls exceeded available space and attendance had to be capped.

"The reality today is that the majority of businesses are started by men and run by men, and girls need to make their own opportunities for themselves, flex this muscle, and see what it feels like," says Davis. "We want to awaken this idea in girls that you can create your own idea, set goals, execute and generate revenue – all from your own ingenuity."

Although the program targets girls, interested boys are welcome, Davis says.

For the girls, the Makers Market was the culmination of several weeks of preparation, including an adult-facilitated planning session featuring lessons in refining

product ideas, pricing, marketing signage and promotion. A panel of girls with existing businesses answered questions and mentored younger entrepreneurs.

Hayley O'Brien, a fourth grader from Pleasant Hill, was among the mentors, along with her friend and neighbor Aria Forney, a seventh grader. Earlier this year the girls created a line of moisturizing lotion bars and lip balms using beeswax from a neighborhood beekeeper. "We were selling them at my mom's boutique, but the Girls Makers Market is when we really took off – we made \$300!" says O'Brien.

Forney echoes the enthusiasm. "The most fun part was talking to customers about our product and seeing people get interested in what we were selling. We learned how to improve our product descriptions, and now we might try to advertise and sell in other places. We're thinking of selling on Etsy."

While the older girls were learning to think like entrepreneurs and develop business skills, younger participants gained a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence, say their parents.

"We thought this would be a good way for the girls to see that they can make a difference even though they're so little," says Cynthia Raub of Hercules, whose two young daughters participated. Olivia, 6, gathered succulent clippings from neighbors and planted them in pretty pots; Emily, 5, baked goodies and dog treats. Both girls sold out rapidly and were able to give their proceeds to No Kid Hungry, a charity supported by their father. "They were so proud to be able to help their dad. Showing them at a young age what they're capable of was really important," says Raub.

Due to strong community interest, plans are underway for a holiday Girls Makers Market. Families can stay abreast of developments at www.facebook.com/girlsmakersmarket.