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Sheep-shearing event held at Bedford Hills farm

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BEDFORD HILLS

With sunlight streaming through her golden blond hair, Alexandra Hartman knelt beside a mound of freshly sheared wool, brushing one soft strand.

The 7-year-old from Manhattan was mesmerized by the process of spinning the fleece into yarn. There's a lot of nature in Central Park, Alexandra said,

"except there are no sheep."

"It's fascinating for 21st-century kids to see that

their sweaters were once worn by sheep," said Alexandra's mother, Claudia Rader, who brought her children to the third annual sheep shearing event at Rainbeau Ridge yesterday.

About 200 parents and children watched as a professional shearer shaved the farm's seven sheep, including the rare breed of Cotswalds that have lived on the property for about four years.

The event, which brought families from across the Lower Hudson Valley, New York City and Long Island, featured a nature walk through Rainbeau's 15 bucolic acres of farmland.

"My boys are so at home on this farm. They love it here and would rather be doing this than anything else," said Lina Serpico of Chappaqua.

Owner Lisa Schwartz explained the process of shearing, washing, spinning and then dyeing the wool before weaving it into a rug or knitting it into a sweater. Each of the sheep - with the exception of baby Jesse - produced about 10 pounds of wool. Shearing happens once each year.

Though it is best known for its goat cheese, the farm has a mission: to share an appreciation for nature with the public.

"There's a tremendous respect that grows in kids when they interact with the farm animals," Schwartz said as she laid her bare feet onto the wooden pedals of a spinner, ready to turn a fistful of soft, white



Ricky Flores/The Journal News

Donald Kading, a professional shearer from Clinton Corners in Dutchess County, removes the wool from a sheep during yesterday's demonstration at Rainbeau Ridge farm in Bedford Hills.

fleece into tough strands of yarn. A group of small children surrounded her, asking dozens of questions.

"Pull, pull," Schwartz said to Alexandra as they tugged on each end of the fluffy piece of fleece. "You see how it just comes apart like that? If you were wearing a sweater made of this - and someone pulled at your sweater - you'd be naked."

The children laughed at the image.

The bare sheep, however, didn't seem amused.

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