To someone walking through the Golden East Crossing mall Saturday, it might have looked like local Scouts simply were having a good time at a Pinewood Derby and Scout Show.

But the 2013 Tar River District event, which attracted troops from throughout the Twin Counties, was a lot more than that, organizers and participants said.

The event taught young people many life lessons, helped parents bond with their children and helped promote Scouting as a whole, organizers said.

Julia Finch of Spring Hope brought her son, Jacob, to the Pinewood Derby event for the first time. She said he worked on building the car with his father.

"He got to spend some time working with his dad on it, and that was neat, because his daddy was a Boy Scout (when he was younger)," Finch said.

The event taught her son a lot of lessons, she said.

"They learn how to build, to work on a project and fulfill a goal," Finch said. "It teaches him dedication, follow-through. He can't get halfway through and quit and say, 'I'm not going to finish my car.' And there is some bonding (with family) and fun with other boys too."

James Suggs, district commissioner for the Tar River District, said the derby is one of the biggest events for Scouts during the year, but it can't match the turnout of some of those that include camping events. At this year's event, some of the displays were not set up by Scouts, but offered something they might be interested in.

For example, the Tarheel R/C Flyers had set up a display of model airplanes.

"Boy Scouts can earn their aviation merit badge," Suggs said. "Maybe some of (the) older kids are getting to an age where they are thinking of high school or college and get a chance to see other career fields that they normally wouldn't get to see, like aviation, robotics."

Suggs said the event also offers lessons.

"It teaches them good sportsmanship," he said. "It actually gets them to bond with their family members more because their parents help them with their Pinewood Derby cars, and it is a good time to get out and fellowship and talk to fellow Scouts to see what they are doing. Siblings participate. It also promotes Scouting."

Scouting Pack 16 from Red Oak had set up a "Space Derby" display, where they raced propeller-driven model rockets they had built along a wire.

"It is to show Scouts off, to get people's interest in Scouting," pack leader Frank Dandy said.

Members of Boy Scout Troop 76 out of Nashville were making survival bracelets.

The bracelets in the wilderness can be used as a fishing line, to help start a fire or to sew up a cut.

"It is teaching them knot tying and use of rope, survival skills," troop assistant Bob Dees said.