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Celebrating Earth

By: Martin Miron

04/25/2007

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The spirit of the seventies was in the air the weekend of April 21 and 22 as Earth Day celebrations were held at various locations in Collier and Lee counties. A two-day event at the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, 1450 Merrihue Dr., allowed the public to gain free entrance to the preserve for an Earthstravaganza, enjoy boat and kayak rides, participate in children's art workshops and listen to lively, thoughtful music.

Most of all, it was a day to learn and to reflect. With global warming taking prominence in recent headlines, awareness of environmental issues is higher than usual.

Earth Day activities were also held at Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park, Calusa Nature Center Sanibel Island and Cambier Park downtown.

Saturday, April 21, at Koreshan State Historical Site on Corkscrew Road in Estero, a large concert was staged by the Calusa Sierra Club, headlined by popular local vocalist, Robyn Scofield. As hundreds danced and enjoyed the fascinating grounds, they were also treated to kayak rides and informed by a score of exhibits and booths erected by a plethora of crafters, community organizations and agencies. Animals were on hand for adoption from several sources. From Publix to PETA, there was something new to learn at every turn.

One of the more unusual exhibits was the New Horizons diesel school bus, which has been refitted by Naples Biofuel to run on vegetable oil instead of gasoline. On a recent outing with a bus load of children, Director Robert Nichols said, "We ran from Bonita to ECO [nature center] in Ft. Myers for 36 cents, instead of nineteen dollars."

Biofuel President John Puig, who maintains a fleet of two dozen veggie vehicles, said, "Our goal is to convert vehicles like this bus to combine doing an environmental service coordinated with a community effort."

Puig's next project is to pilot a sail and solar-powered "green cargo ship" to the Bahamian island of Cat, with a load of aid and recycled goods to the residents there.

After the other entertainers finished at 4 p.m., a drum circle with over a dozen participants began to generate a throbbing beat that continued unbroken for hours.

When the day was done and all the crowds returned to their homes, our fragile planet was honored and the beautiful tropical paradise we inhabit here in Naples was appreciated.



Naples Biofuel President John Puig takes a break from staffing his group's booth during Earth Day 2007 at the Koreshan State Historical Site to join in the revelry.

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