

A WORLD



The Chamber's Annual Dinner

DATE: May 2nd, 2014 - 5:30 Reception, 6:30 Dinner and Program

LOCATION: The Tiburon at The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort

To register for event, go to: www.NaplesChamber.org/events/Chamber-Annual-Dinner-2014



Contact: Liz Linhart 239.403.2904
www.NaplesChamber.org

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Bonita Spring festival honors annual Earth event

By LAURA GATES

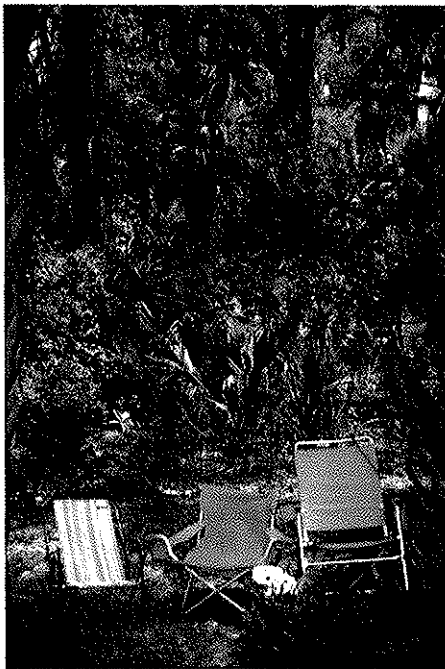
Posted April 8, 2014 at 4 a.m.

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It's a day to unplug and reconnect with nature — and celebrate the Earth.

Whether it's watching a worm, interacting with an iguana or swaying to tunes heard from the solar-powered stage, those who come to Riverside Park on Saturday will help celebrate one of the largest civic worldwide observances at Bonita Spring's Earth Day Festival.

The first Earth Day was in 1970 and held as a protest to pollution and a rally cry for sustainable environmental policy. Earth Day (officially April 22) is now commemorated in more than 192 nations.

The Bonita Springs festival marks the 13th year for the annual event.

"It's a time for people to come out and remember nature," explained longtime organizer Bobbie Lee Davenport. "Protecting the environment is very important, and we have to live in a sustainable world."

Reconnecting with nature is the theme for this year's festival. The event has changed venues, moving from its former home at Koreshan State Historic Site.

"We're pleased so many people have recognized Riverside Park as the pre-eminent venue for outdoor events," said Bonita Springs Mayor Ben Nelson. "It's so beautiful and right next to the river. It's a natural fit."

The Earth Day Festival also has moved up a week on the calendar to avoid conflicts

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with other green-themed festivities.

"We decided Earth Day was every day," Davenport said of the local festival.

The day of free festivities kicks off at 10 a.m. and concludes with a two-hour drum circle at 4:30 p.m. Children's activities, musical performances, live animal viewings, crafts, vendors, display booths and nature experiences will be scattered throughout the park, with many activities crossing the railroad tracks.

"We're taking over the whole park," Davenport said. In the past, the event has drawn anywhere from 500 to 2,500 visitors. There will be plenty to see and do, as the festival grows bigger each year, Davenport said.

"It's a time for people to come out and remember nature," she explained.

Kids will be treated to a dinosaur ride and play in a Dino Bone Yard, provided by No Limits Learning. They can also paint a teepee, examine microscopic organisms at an on-site science lab and "Explore the Core."

"The kids crawl through this interactive cave experience like you're in the center of the earth," Davenport explained, of the "Explore the Core" exhibit.

Kayak rides on the Imperial River will be offered throughout the day, and C Shell Flower will operate craft stations. More than 50 organizations will have interactive displays.

"There is something for all ages," Davenport said.

Live animals will include the Pit Bull Crew — advocating pit bull rescue — and wolf dogs from Shy Wolf Sanctuary. Kowiachobee Animal Preserve will bring its leopard and a friendly iguana, which likes to interact with the crowd.

The main event is Project Nature Connect, run by Janet Weisberg.

"I have a passion to help us make this reconnection (to nature), so we can understand why we feel so much better when we're outside," she explained. "This reconnection is simple, but it does require a moment to ask for consent. We don't have the right to just take."

Weisberg will run five activities from her "earthing station," explaining humanity's partner relationship with Mother Earth and how to follow a natural attraction to find peace and empowerment.

"Following our natural attractions are the things that support us in the moment in our being," she said. "I'm helping people reconnect. You go out in nature and ask for consent to interact, whether it's a tree, a flower or leaf."

Musicians will perform throughout the day on a solar-powered stage created by Fafco Solar. Music starts at 11 a.m. with Freedom Evolving, followed by Natural Spirit, Small Craft Advisory, Sweetclover and Adam Mack.

Food vendors include free-range barbecue from the Lions Club and Indian food by Kishnors Kitchen, along with Ben & Jerry's ice cream.

A poster from Southwest Florida photographer Clyde Butcher, other donated artwork,



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60°

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MORE

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The Mercato

FREE Kids Crafts
Miromar Outlets

Orange Jeep Tours 8 a.m.
Ave Maria La Piazza Town Center

Tigertail Beach Walk 5:30 a.m.
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Clam Pass Nature Walk 9 a.m.
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services and merchandise will be raffled off.

The 2014 theme for Earth Day is "Green Cities," and Nelson said Bonita Springs is working toward that goal.

"Sustainability is more than just one committee," he said. "Sustainability is a large program, and it has to do with the way we do business and the things we do every day."

Davenport's favorite part of Earth Day each year is the conclusion — a community drum circle that involves up to 300 drummers. This festive event is BYOD: Bring Your Own Drum.

"It's fabulous," Davenport said. "A lot of people get in the middle of the drum circle and dance. It's a fun way to end the day."

EARTH DAY FESTIVAL

When: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday

Where: Riverside Park, 27300 Old 41 Road in Bonita Springs

Cost: Free

Information: www.cityofbonitasprings.org or 239-777-0186

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