BAY REFLECTIONS

June 2012

Welcome Readers: In This Edition

We normally publish every other month beginning in January, but we decided to do a special June edition to announce the award recipients of Bay Partners Grants for 2012, explain the Florida Sea Grant Study of Sarasota Bay social values, and share other news. The Sarasota Bay Water Festival is also seeking more sponsors. Please note the 19 organizations already involved in supporting the regional event focused on Sarasota Bay Recreation, Bay Science & Education, and Bay Creative Arts. Your prospective sponsorship would help us produce the free event and raise funds that support local environmental education programs. Sponsor donations are not due until August 15, but please sign up now to take advantage of the ongoing promotion efforts.
Thank you for your interest in all of the programs and projects associated with SBEP and our valued partners.

Randy Moore, Editor

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SBEP Awards Eight Bay Partner Grants to Diverse Groups Based in Sarasota and Manatee Counties

SBEP recently awarded eight grants for 2012 as part of its Bay Partners Grant Program. The local recipients include City of Sarasota, Florida House, Founder's Garden Club of Sarasota, Nature's Academy, Sunbow Bay Condominium Association, Mote Marine Laboratory, Sarasota Bay Watch, and Keep Manatee Beautiful. The grants total $20,000. SBEP has awarded more than $213,000 to support 109 local grant requests since 2003.

High school students with the Mote Marine Intern Program.

Planned projects for 2012 include a rain garden, a demonstration of pervious pavers, installation of a bio-retention pond, marine science field trips, Bay-friendly landscaping, new signs that promote education about the bay, trash clean up, and the removal of invasive plant species. Future editions of Bay Reflections will provide details about some of the completed projects.

All of the grants support Sarasota Bay waters and habitat. The next deadline for future Bay Partners Grants is March 1, 2013. **Click here** to learn more. A subcommittee with the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee reviews applications and selects the grant recipients.

Sarasota Bay Water Festival Seeking Additional Sponsors for Free Regional Event October 6

The inaugural Sarasota Bay Water Festival is set for Saturday, October 6 at Ken Thompson Park near Mote Marine Laboratory. Highlights include live music on the main stage, local food vendors, activities for kids, interesting science and environmental education exhibits, a wildlife photography and art contest, displays promoting boating, kayaking, fishing, paddle boarding, scuba diving, birding, cycling, and more.

The three areas of focus are Bay Recreation, Bay Science & Education, and Bay Creative Arts. A team of 18 volunteer coordinators are planning and supporting the free community event.

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) is the Host Sponsor and Triple 3 Marketing is handling production and marketing. Early Champion Sponsors include Sarasota County, Manatee County, HDR Engineering, City of Sarasota, City of Bradenton, Solar Direct, Town of Longboat Key, and the Southwest Florida Water Management District. Early Friend Sponsors include Mote Marine Laboratory, New College of Florida, Caldwell Trust Company, Friends of Sarasota County Parks, Save Our Seabirds, Sarasota Sailing Squadron, Around the Bend Nature Tours, Sarasota Audubon Society, and the UF/IFAS Extension in both counties.

Click here to learn more about sponsorship or contact Randy at randy@triple3marketing.com.

Sea Grant Study of Sarasota Bay Social Values Offers Convenient Online Survey Option with Digital Map

Area residents have an opportunity to participate in a unique online survey designed to help researchers better understand the social values associated with Sarasota Bay. Please visit **sarasotabaysurvey.org** to view the online survey tool and digital map (Pass code is SBEP). The online survey combines traditional questions with an interactive mapping exercise that provide an opportunity to reference specific areas.

Zachary Cole

The Florida Sea Grant Study is being conducted by Zachary Cole, a PhD candidate at the University of Florida. The purpose of the social values study is to better understand how people value Sarasota Bay resources in ways that may not be reported by traditional economic studies. A study of social values quantifies natural resources including personal experiences like watching the sunset, fishing, kayaking and many other activities.

The study will also collect information about particular areas within the Sarasota Bay ecosystem that are popular for various reasons. For example, some areas within Sarasota Bay are valued for great fishing or kayaking while other areas are preferred destinations for birding or hiking. **Click here** to learn more about the Sea Grant Study. **Click here** to read an interview with Zac Cole in Sarasota Bay Today.

SBEP is supporting the study by setting up workshops with local professionals that are familiar with Sarasota Bay resources. The organization is also helping to promote the study. SBEP is in the process of conducting its own economic value study of Sarasota Bay under the guidance of Paul Hindsley, PhD. An update about the study will be featured in an upcoming edition of Bay Reflections

SBEP Completes Two New Oyster Habitats in Sarasota Bay at White Beach and Near Tidy Island

SBEP recently completed two new oyster habitats in Sarasota Bay. The locations are White Beach in Little Sarasota Bay and along the eastern shore of Manatee County south of Tidy Island. At White Beach, the project increased the footprint of an older oyster habitat established in 2005. The reef in Manatee County is a newly established oyster habitat. Both reefs are located in shallow water.

Oyster beds represent a unique and valuable component of the Sarasota Bay ecosystem. They provide structural habitat for many species of fish and invertebrates. Oysters are also valued for their ability to improve water quality through their prolific filtering capacity. Many oyster beds in Sarasota Bay were destroyed as a result of physical disturbances associated with rapid coastal development. Some oyster beds were also buried under sediments.

An earlier pilot project demonstrated that oyster habitats are substrate limited. This means that oysters will not recover without suitable and sufficient substrate material for oysters to attach and grow. The substrate material used at these sites features fossilized shell and a perimeter of bagged fossil shells are used to help hold the reef together. The interior area within the oyster reef habitat features a layer of loose shell up to two feet thick. Natural oyster larvae, also known as spat, are available from nearby oyster beds to colonize the shell.

As the reefs mature over the next few years, SBEP will monitor new oyster growth and reef colonization by fish and invertebrates. SBEP will continue to evaluate opportunities for improving oyster habitat throughout Sarasota Bay with the long term goal of improving water quality and future fishing opportunities. This project was partially funded by The Nature Conservancy.

Bay Guardians Complete Project at Emerson Point; Next Outing Set for July 14 at North Lido Beach Park

Bay Guardian volunteers at Lido Beach planting in 2011.

The SBEP Bay Guardians have been busy in 2012. The volunteers have completed projects at Emerson Point Preserve on May 12, North Water Tower Park on April 14 and Quick Point Preserve on March 10. The next volunteer outing is set for July 14 at North Lido Beach Park. **Click here** to register.

Recent projects have involved planting Florida-native plants, removing non-native plants such as air potato vines, removing debris, and making portable Stow It Don't Throw It containers for unusable monofilament fishing line. Participating groups included Martha B. King Middle School in Bradenton, Future Leaders Academy in Sarasota, the High School Intern Program with Mote Marine Laboratory, Bradenton Cub Scout Pack 22, Apollo Beach Cub Scout Pack 93, and the Sky Pilots Disc Golf Club.

The Sarasota Bay Guardians is a family-friendly program that SBEP manages in partnership with Around the Bend Nature Tours. New volunteers receive a blue t-shirt featuring the Bay Guardians logo. Each outing features environmental education and a picnic lunch. Join the Bay Guardians for a single project or as an ongoing commitment. Local school, scout and church groups interested in volunteering can contact Sara Kane at sara@sarasotabay.org.

Bay Partners Grant Profile: GWIZ Presents Water Wonder Workshops to 150 Fifth and Sixth Graders

GWIZ Science Museum recently provided three Water Wonder Workshops to 150 local students in fifth and sixth grade from Lamarque Elementary, Heron Creek Middle School and Englewood Elementary. The program included classroom instruction about the physical and chemical properties of water and guided bay walks to learn more about local plants, wildlife and the impact of human development on local ecosystems. The final component of the workshops was comprehensive water testing and microscope observation.

SBEP provided funding support for the GWIZ workshops through its Bay Partners Grant Program. The purpose of the grant program is to promote environmental education, awareness and stewardship that benefit Sarasota Bay and its tributaries. Funding is available for local projects that focus on Bay education, Bay restoration or Bay-friendly landscaping. SBEP has awarded more than $213,000 to support 109 local grant requests since 2003. All of the grants require an education component that encourages Bay-friendly stewardship.

Hold the Fertilizer this Summer Thru September 30

The partners of the Be Floridian fertilizer education campaign remind Sarasota and Manatee County residents they cannot apply nitrogen or phosphorus to their lawn or plants during the summer season. Sarasota and Manatee County ban application of fertilizers from June 1 through September 30.

Not using fertilizers in the summer reduces the amount of chemicals running into Sarasota Bay through the storm drain system following rainfalls. The heavy amount of nitrogen and phosphorus has an adverse impact on water quality and it can also harm aquatic life.

Garden centers throughout the area offer a variety of products that will help keep landscapes green and growing through the summer months. These "summer-safe" products comply with local fertilizer ordinances. Other practices that are good for local yards and Sarasota Bay include applying products with potassium or magnesium, mixing in composted cow or chicken manure to enrich the soil, applying iron, and planting Florida native plants which require less water and fertilizer.

Photo by Dotty Motta of Bradenton.

SBEP is a partner of the Be Floridian fertilizer education campaign sponsored by Tampa Bay Estuary Program. The idea behind the campaign is that many lawn care practices in other regions of the U.S. are not good for Florida lawns or water bodies. To "Be Floridian" is to be aware of suitable practices and products. Fertilizing less means having more time to do fun things like go to the beach or enjoy outdoor recreation. Learn more about Bay-friendly practices

at **befloridian.org** and **sarasotabay.org**.

Interview Links for the Sarasota Bay Today Blog

Click here for Tim Rumage, PhD with Ringling School of Art & Design (Environmental Ethics)
Click here for Zachary Cole with the University of Florida (Sea Grant Study of Sarasota Bay)
Click here for Chris Costello with Sierra Club (Florida Water Issues)
Click here for Jay Leverone, PhD with SBEP (Local Restoration Projects)
Click here for Jeanne Dubi with Sarasota Audubon Society (Local & Migrating Birds)
Click here for Jack Merriam formerly with Sarasota County (Sarasota Bay Issues)
Click here for Jon Thaxton with Sarasota County (Local Water Issues)
Click here for Sara Kane with SBEP (SBEP Public Outreach Programs)
Click here for Paul Hindsley, PhD (SBEP Funded Economic Value Study)
Click here for Randy Moore with Triple 3 Marketing (Sarasota Bay Water Festival)

Final Reflection with Barbara Bowen

Click here to see more images by Barbara Bowen on the SBEP Creative Expressions Gallery. Barbara is an avid hiker, member of the Florida Trail Association and an award-winning wildlife photographer. New content continues to be added to the Expressions Gallery to showcase the passion many people feel about the beauty and importance of Sarasota Bay.

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