

## Third rock is the star at Earth Day celebration at Sarasota's Bay Park

Family activities and tables on the bay were designed to encourage appreciation of the environment.

By [Ian Swaby](#) | 9:00 a.m. April 23, 2023



2-year-old Zakylee Elliott, 3-year-old Zynylah Elliott, 5-year-old Nikolas Cotirla, 8-year-old Ava Colindres, and 5-year-old Nikolas Cotirla learn about composting at the Sunshine Community Compost station.

Photo by Ian Swaby

SARASOTA NEIGHBORS

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For Tracie Troxler, the close connection between the recreational areas and bay waters at The Bay Park highlighted the importance of composting, which she was there to teach on Earth Day on April 22.

“What happens to the soil happens to the water,” said Troxler. “What happens to the water happens to the people. So it's a good partnership, because people can really see that.”

The founder and executive director of Sunshine Community Compost, Troxler wasn't the only one there to educate the public and celebrate the planet at Earth Day at The Bay.

The city of Sarasota decided to host its annual environmental fest at the park, marking the park's first Earth Day celebration following its opening in October 2022.

The park also partnered with Remake Learning to offer educational activities, including scavenger hunts, a science station and free kayak sessions through Ride & Paddle.

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## Earth Day Celebration Tabling Event

Frances Bermudez, an activation and program manager with The Bay Park Conservancy, said the park — a place designed to preserve the natural mangrove environment — was the perfect location to host an event for Earth Day.

“Everything that The Bay is doing is really about honoring the Earth and restoring it back to what the Earth should be, and would be, if we hadn’t interfered,” she said.

Jeff Vredenburg, sustainability coordinator with the city of Sarasota, said this was the same reason the city was hosting the tabling event at the park; previously it had been held at other locations, including most recently at Selby Five Points Park.

He also said scheduling the occasion on a Saturday rather than a Friday was intended to draw a wider crowd.

The tabling brought together several organizations focused on various aspects of the environment.

Sustainable food samples from Transition Sarasota, information and activities related to vertical oyster gardens from Sarasota Bay Estuary Program were offered along with a University of Florida Innovation Station craft workshop designed to promote an interest in engineering.



Twelve-year-old Eleenor Iturmendi, Nancy Albright, and 11-year-old Olivia Andrzejewski string together shells to create vertical oyster gardens in a Sarasota Bay Estuary Program workshop, in order to provide habitats for marine life.

Photo by Ian Swaby

“I like to think I planted some seeds today,” said Charles Reith of Sarasota Urban ReForesters, who said he had been able to promote the microforest-centered organization to numerous members of the public.

The partnerships did not end at the city level; the park also announced that during International Composting Awareness Week from May 7-15, it would begin hosting a public composting station by Sunshine Community Compost.

## Suncoast Remake Learning Days



To help provide activities, the park joined with Remake Learning Days, which facilitated stations and activities staffed by different community organizations and companies.

Offerings included distribution of seed planting kits by First 1,000 Days, a scavenger hunt by Run SRQ, free kayak rides by Ride & Paddle, and a table by Sidewalk Science Center.



Alex Martin of Sidewalk Science Center shows the sunspot to Activation and Program Manager Frances Bermudez.

Photo by Ian Swaby

Alex Martin of Sidewalk Science Center said the activities helped kids connect with the nature they might observe in the park, including animals that can be seen there, and even the sunlight illuminating the day.

The previous week, Martin said, the sun had released a large solar flare which impacted the earth, while a telescope he provided allowed viewers to see the sunspot that had produced the flare.

### **About Suncoast Remake Learning Days**

Spanning Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee, and Sarasota counties, Suncoast Remake Learning Days is a festival of free events for children and families, held at multiple sites from April 21-30 and funded by The Patterson Foundation.

Events are categorized by themes which include the arts, outdoor learning, science, technology and other topics. Also on offer are professional development opportunities for parents and educators.

For information visit [RemakeLearningDays.org](https://RemakeLearningDays.org).

### **Free exploration**

Craig Clevenger, the lead kayak guide for Ride & Paddle, said the free 30-minute tandem kayak rides would spark further interest in kayaking.

Some, he said, would not be willing to pay for the price of a rental, while others may not be able to find a space in the company's free guided tours each Saturday, which are booked out far in advance.





Eddie Alarcon and 8-year-old Leyla Alarcon head out on a free kayaking trip.

Photo by Ian Swaby

“It’s a good opportunity to just try kayaking for the first time, and have that experience, especially for families where it’s the kid’s first time ever doing something like that — sometimes the parents as well,” he said.

He said due to the removal of mangroves in order to develop the coastline, places like The Bay Park are a rarity in the city area. He said bingo sheets handed out to kayakers offered an added layer of engagement with nature.



AUTHOR

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Ian Swaby is the Sarasota neighbors writer for the Observer. Ian is a Florida State University graduate of Editing, Writing, and Media and previously worked in the publishing industry in the Cayman Islands.

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