



CATALINA ISLAND CONSERVANCY

PRESS RELEASE
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Earth Day Event Draws More Than 1,000 Visitors

Organic food was served, down-home music was played, and a greener, cleaner planet was celebrated at an early Earth Day event held on Saturday, April 10 at the Nature Center at Avalon Canyon. During the course of the day, more than 1,000 visitors mingled among the many booths and demonstrations.



Andrew Hernandez, 4th grade (left) and John Raymond Meza, 2nd grade dig invasive fennel. In the background, Haley Campbell, 4th grade (left) and Jeniece Neville, 6th grade dig away!
Photo by Bob Rhein

"This was a terrific event," said Frank Hein, Education Program Supervisor for the Conservancy which hosted the event. "There's no better way to feel optimistic about the environment than to spend the day with folks who are already making our Island, and the world, a better place."

New this year was the presence of transportation alternatives in the form of "Smart Cars" from Buffalo Motors, solar-powered golf carts from Catalina Yamaha, and electric bicycles from Best Buy. "Just the fact that we've got so many Island-friendly transportation options to choose from here is pretty inspiring," Hein said.

Hard at work, wielding shovels and other digging devices in the vacant field adjoining the Nature Center, were students from the Avalon Schools who became Fennel Eradicators for the day. They dug up the beautiful, but highly invasive licorice-smelling plants, under the direction of “Crew Boss” Nathan Barrow, age 9. Nathan’s father, Shane Barrow, the Conservancy’s Invasive Plant Program Manager, said the exercise was an important learning experience for the youngsters. “We are teaching them that invasive plants are detrimental to our native plant communities,” he said. “They are learning first-hand the importance of environmental restoration through invasive plant removal.” Shane was assisted by members of the invasive plant team including Shaun McCoshum, Christine Mauer, Tony Summers and Irene Andruchenko an American Conservation Experience (ACE) intern.

Of course Conservancy’s staff was out in force with beautiful displays of native plants. Sarah Ratay, Plant Biologist, met with visitors and shared information on identifying plants in bloom and their importance to the Island’s ecosystem. Peter Dixon, Supervisor of the James H. Ackerman Native Plant Nursery, along with Nursery Technician Chris Todd and intern Richard Mansfield, sold Catalina native plants to visitors. The Native Plant Nursery located in Middle Ranch has supplied flora to sites in Avalon such as the Miniature Golf Course and will soon be landscaping the Banning House Lodge in Two Harbors.

Kids of all ages enjoyed the very popular touch tank full of life from the Island’s near shore brought in by staff members of the Catalina Island Marine Institute (CIMI), and everybody’s favorite Catalina Island fox, Tachi, handled by Wildlife Biologists Julie King and Calvin Duncan.

Also attending Earth Day were 21 members of Kids in Nature (KIN), clad in their distinctive lime green shirts. KIN is the Conservancy’s after school program headed up by Rich “Mr. Z” Zanelli with Kelly Callaghan-Skoff, assisting, where students learn about science and nature and make connections to their own lives. “Seeing all those green shirts out there made it feel like Earth Day was an extension of Kids in Nature,” Zanelli said.

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Callaghan-Skoff also supervised an Earth Day art contest for Avalon students. Winning first place was Rebekah Perea, 11, for her poem “Dandelions,” a watercolor, and a painted rock. Her brother, Paul, 9, won an honorable mention with two painted rocks and a watercolor. Other contestants were Megan Gonzalez, 12; Justus Ramming, 12; and Brittney Evens, 7.

“It was really, genuinely a fun day,” recapped Hein. “Thanks to everyone for coming out to eat, chat, learn and play. I can't wait until we can do it all again.”

Thanks to the following participants:

- Musicians Vern Altieri, Butch Azevedo, Mike King, Mary Stein, and Angie and Dan Teckenoff. Hein also sang and played the guitar;
- Tom Quinn, Avalon poet, who shared original work penned specially for Earth Day; and Rebekah Perea who helped read his work;
- Bill Agresta for outstanding work putting the sound system together;
- Angie and Craig Bera from Dinghy Docks for providing all the delicious, fresh, organic food;
- Meriam Djelidi of Island Poppy Care;
- Joe and Veva D'Albero of Island Chariots;
- Best Buy Stores for the electric bike display;
- Buffalo Motors for the Smart Car display;
- Catalina Yamaha for the solar golf cart display;
- Mikael Walter of Catalina Pottery;
- Autumn Reifensnyder of Bay of Seven Moons;
- Sanyo for exhibits of batteries and solar technologies;
- PLAY Preschool for a selection of excellent dessert items;
- Janet and Rose Wall for their beautiful henna artwork;
- The Catalina Island Humane Society for their responsible pet owner information;
- Claudia Canby for supplying banners;
- Randy Brannock, Carlos de la Rosa and Rich Zanelli for manning the grill to feed hungry visitors;

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- Student art contest participants;
- Nathan Barrow for supervising the Fennel Eradication Team;
- E-catalina for filming the event;
- Outstanding volunteers from Americorps and Felix Ventures; and
- All community volunteers and Conservancy staff who helped make the day a success.

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