

Local groups doing their part for Earth Day

Apr 8, 2010

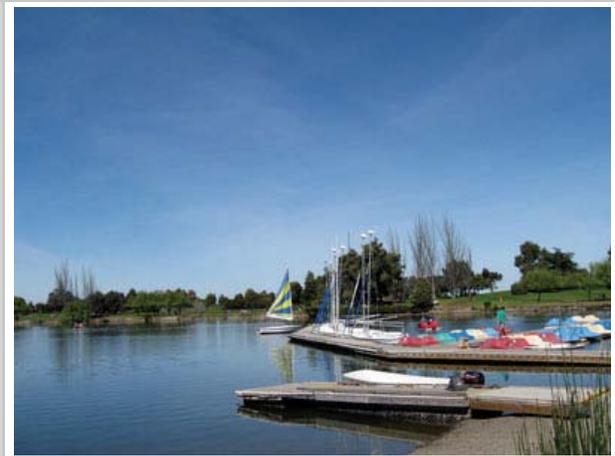
By Chuck Flagg
Gilroy Dispatch

Most readers may be familiar with the biblical story of Noah's Ark. After the 40-day flood subsided and Noah, his family and the animal cargo returned to dry land, God made some important pronouncements.

In Genesis 9, God tells Noah: "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.... Be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly on earth and multiply in it."

These words had a profound effect on the development of humans. For centuries, our species mastered the earth, heedlessly destroying plants and other animals, polluting and despoiling wherever we went.

Even so, an ethic of conservation and ecology and a respect for the environment has slowly developed. On April 22, 1970, the first U.S. Earth Day was observed through the efforts of Wisconsin's U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson.



Mountain View's Shoreline Park was built on the site of a former garbage dump, becoming an excellent example of environmentalism.

It has been celebrated in our country every year since. (The United Nations selected this date for its "International Mother Earth Day").

Religious groups are taking a prominent role in the preservation of our environment. An example is the Interfaith Environmental Alliance, which seeks to organize local congregations for action.

"What's happening to the environment is a faith issue, a moral, spiritual issue, and religious people are late to the table," said Gary Stuard, a researcher at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

His group advocates such actions as changing to compact fluorescent lightbulbs, banning Styrofoam cups at coffee hours and mobilizing congregations for action against global warming.

The Catholic Green Initiative of Santa Clara County is holding a town hall meeting Saturday on Environmental Stewardship.

Organizers say, "Catholic Social Teaching impresses upon us that nature is not something to exploit but is God's creation to preserve." Participants will focus on how to act in environmentally conscious ways.

As part of its environmental emphasis this month, the Public Broadcasting System will present "American Experience: Earth Days" on KQED, channel 9 at 9 p.m. tonight.

Director Robert Stone revisits the origins of modern environmentalism through the eyes of nine Americans who worked in the movement from its beginnings in the 1950s to the original Earth Day in 1970. It combines discussion of the complex relationships between humans and nature with a look at responses to our ongoing environmental crisis.

There will be a free talk open to the public titled "Ecological conversion: What St. Francis Can Teach us" at 2 p.m. on April 18 at the Vallombrosa Center, 250 Oak Grove Ave., Menlo Park. Dr. James Neafsey will discuss how the spiritual vision of St. Francis of Assisi "challenges us to ecological conversion in our personal, communal and institutional lives."

On April 24, Mt. Madonna School will hold its fourth annual Festival for the Environment at the mountain-top campus located at 491 Summit Road, Watsonville. Admission is free, but there is a \$5 carbon offset fee, which is waived for those presenting, those participating in the Summit for the Planet hike-a-thon or for anyone who carools (three or more in a vehicle).

From 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., there will be live music, eco-friendly shopping, a "trash fashion show," student exhibits, hands-on learning activities and natural crafts and arts. Organic food and refreshments will be available.

A wide variety of respected environmental organizations will be presenting educational exhibits and talks, among them are:

- California Certified Organic Farmers: promoting the production and consumption of nutritious food.
- Elkhorn Slough Foundation: conserving and restoring a local waterway.
- FishWise: educating the public about sustainable fish harvests.
- Marine Mammal Center: improving marine mammal survival and conservation of habitat.
- Otter Project: promoting the recovery of the California sea otter.
- Santa Clara County Department of Parks and recreation: interpreting nature.
- Santa Clara County Audubon Society: fostering public awareness of native birds and their ecosystems.

The Green Christian Network has suggested a number of activities that families can undertake in honor of Earth Day 2010:

- Plant a tree to absorb CO₂.
- Recycle household cans, paper, glass, etc..
- Clean up by going to the park and picking up litter.
- Go on a nature walk and enjoy the beautiful environment God has created