

VENICE GONDOLIER

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2006

County honors pollution prevention volunteers

Staff Report

STAFF REPORT

On Sept. 12, the Sarasota County Commission honored local volunteers for their efforts in pollution reduction within the community and proclaimed Sept. 18-24 Pollution Prevention Week countywide.

During the commission meeting, Environmental Services Executive Director Rob Patten recognized volunteers Ken Heckert of the Rivendell Homeowners Association, Susan Chapman of the Hudson Bayou Neighborhood Association and Lindsey Kraus, a 10th-grade student at Cardinal Mooney High School, for their pollution prevention efforts.

Focus for the week of Sept. 18-24 will be on volunteer work in four programs designed to protect the area's watersheds, promote sustainable communities and enhance economic development by attracting green businesses with pollution-free technology.

One of those programs is the county's Storm Drain Marking Program, an educational campaign designed to raise awareness about stormwater pollution by teaching residents that storm drains are the main arteries to our waterways.

Sarasota County Water Resources staff has begun working with the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program to organize volunteers who mark storm drains throughout the county. The estuary program contributed \$1,000 to create specialized markers that read, "This drains to Sarasota Bay."

Another program is Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Team. The county's NEST program helps citizens understand and improve local environmental conditions in their surrounding watershed. Some of their activities in improving water quality include marking storm drains, limiting fertilizer use and restoring native vegetation in and around stormwater ponds.

Pollution Prevention Week will feature the following activities:

- At 9 a.m. Friday, Sept. 22, volunteers will mark storm drains in Indian Beach and Sapphire Shores Beach.

- At 9 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 23, Cardinal Mooney students and Hudson Bayou residents will mark drains in their communities.

- At 9 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 23, residents in the Rivendell subdivision of Osprey will meet at the intersection of Placid Lakes Drive and Scherer Way to restore habitat by planting butterfly gardens and creating underwater reef balls for marine habitat.

Residents of the Hudson Bayou basin, including the neighborhoods of Hudson Bayou, Laurel, Alta Vista, Terrace Gardens and Gillespie Park, will also be marking drains in their communities.

"This is an effective reminder for all of us to get involved in sustainable activities, expand our current efforts and commit to new actions," said Sarasota County Environmental Specialist Kelly Westover. "But it's important to emphasize that this is not just a one-week effort for Sarasota County."

Westover points out that one of the county's most visible pollution program leaders is Solid Waste, which has created numerous residential

and commercial waste and recycling efforts.

"Electronics and appliance pick-up can be arranged with a phone call," she says. "The 'You call, we haul' program trains volunteers to hold household hazardous waste

collection events in their communities so they can be safely transported to the county's two chemical collection centers. Much of that waste includes common household cleaners and paints. The paint is actually

recycled and offered for free to residents at the county's Re-Uz-It Shop."

Solid Waste also runs a needle disposal program to manage medical needle waste safely; its programs deal with collection of every-

thing from batteries to oils, tires and computers to prevent them from clogging our landfills with harmful materials.

For information on how to get involved, call the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-

5000 and ask to speak with a representative from Water Resources (for the storm drain marking and NEST programs), Solid Waste or Sustainable Sarasota.

Source: Sarasota County