

The Second Annual Conservation Connection Day to be held on March 7th.

If you are among the 200 people that attended Conservation Connection Day last year, then you are in for an even better event this time around. If you didn't get a chance to visit us last year, please mark your calendars for Saturday, March 7th from 9 a.m. through 4 p.m. Over 20 environmental agencies will join together at the Bert J. Harris Jr. Agricultural Center and meet the citizens of our beautiful county. Hosted by the Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District (HSWCD), the event will include exhibits from agencies all over the state who will have information and free give a ways for all who come by.

This year the HSWCD is partnering with our neighbors at the Highlands County Extension office and the "Saving money going green" seminar. On Friday, March 6th, speakers will be presenting on "green" building, irrigation, recycling and even financing houses that are built to green specs. Sustainability is a hot topic these days and you will be able to acquire some useful information if "going green" is in your future.

Then on Saturday, March 7th, many different agencies will be on site to answer any questions you may have and hand out plenty of information. We understand that government can be confusing and it is our goal to "bridge the gap" and make it easier for you to find out what the different agencies do. It is also a wonderful opportunity to share with you, our valued citizens, information about the unique and precious natural resources in this area and all over the state. This event also gives you the opportunity to see where some of your tax dollars go!

Even though last year's event was a huge success, we listened to our visitor's constructive criticism and took their advice. Many folks stated that they would prefer to have such events on the weekend and in the cooler months. This year the event will be held on a Saturday and it will be indoors as well as outdoors. There will be free hotdogs and drinks and lots of activities for the kids.

We will have a big slide and bounce house as well as several different environmental activities for the younger visitors. Home Depot will be on site to assist the kid's with a building project that they can take home. Free hot dogs, drinks and give a ways will be available. There will also be other snacks and treats for sale. No matter what your age, there should be something for everyone.

This year some of the agencies that will participate include the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Highlands County 4-H, Southwest Florida Water Management District, South Florida Water Management District, Division of Forestry, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Archbold Biological Station, Wrede's Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Master Gardeners, Keep Highlands County Beautiful, South Dade Soil and Water conservation District, Avon Park Bombing Range, Highlands County Lakes Association, Riverwoods Field Lab, Ridge Rangers and Highlands Hammock State Park.

The event is free. Bring the kids and stop by for a little while or all day. Each of us needs to do whatever we can to conserve and protect our natural resources. The first step in being part of the solution is information. You need to understand your natural areas and the challenges and

dangers that face them. This is your chance to find out about your natural surroundings and the people who work in them. The whys and hows of the different programs that are being implemented; understanding of complex projects; what department does what and who to contact for information are just some of the subjects that you can learn more about by attending this exciting event.

It is the hope of the Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District that you will walk away with a better understanding of the precious natural resources in the area and certainly be more knowledgeable about which agencies to contact for your needs. But perhaps most of all, we hope that the children will be inspired to learn more about the environment, to be better stewards of our land a maybe even make a positive difference in the future regarding our natural resources.

We hope to see you there.