

Hi-Riser

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TORTUGA MUSIC FESTIVAL,



FULL HOUSE Fort Lauderdale beach was a sea of fans during the Tortuga Music Festival, held on April 12 and 13. STAFF PHOTO/SETH BLACK

Students' research helps protect area marine life

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To truly learn about marine science, students at New River Middle School in Fort Lauderdale don't just read about the subject in the classroom, they head out on field experiments to ensure the students also gain first-hand knowledge.

The latest field training

occurred at Hugh Taylor Birch State Park in Fort Lauderdale, where the students were starting to conduct tests to determine if the water that enters the Atlantic Ocean from the park is suitable for the marine habitat.

"By doing this, they become better environmen-

tal stewards because they are actually seeing the practical application of all the science they're learning in the classroom," said Barbara Rapoza, a science teacher at New River Middle. "They're seeing it at work and in the field to

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2014 Earth Day Issue



Local gardens thrive as bigger mission unfolds

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Pineapples are growing now at City Farms, a small community garden located on Northeast Sixth Avenue in Middle River Terrace. But there is still more in the works, said Donna Collins, co-manager of the garden.

"We're getting ready to start our orchard with trees donated by the city," she said.

City Farms has been in the works since 2008, when the area was catching on to community gardens. It was claimed they could perk up a neighborhood, get people away from the TV, wean them from junk food and keep fresh produce affordable.

The garden, which

takes up a quarter of an acre, is farmed by the half-dozen residents who have plots there.

"They grow what they want," Collins said. "This season we've had a full crop of tomatoes, squash, all kinds of greens.

"A lot of the produce is donated," she said. "We take it to The Pantry of Broward and to the kids in the foster care program."

But City Farms isn't the only of its kind. Community gardens have popped up all over the city.

A cloud hangs over the garden on the Church of the Intercession property on Northwest 17th Street, said garden co-manager Steve Kantner. The gar-

den, which has been in place since 2000, is operated by the church's congregation and owned by the Episcopal Diocese of Miami.

The property is for sale, threatening the enterprise that donates food to the needy and serves the community in other ways.

"We do youth functions," Kantner said. "Kids with minor offenses learn the benefits of low carbon impact healthy gardening and their offenses are expunged."

A developer is seeking to take over the land and build townhomes, and "the Diocese told me

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help them see the importance of it."

Students from Rapoza's class are conducting the experiments as part of the 20th annual Wheelabrator Symposium for Environment and Education, which has groups of stu-

dents identifying a local environmental issue and then trying to find innovative solutions.

New River Middle was the first school in South Florida to participate in the symposium that includes Learning in Florida's Environment, which is a program created by the Florida Department of Environ-

mental Protection.

This year's symposium will take place from May 5 to 8 and will focus on "Connecting to the Oceans," with students focusing on providing solutions for a sustainable future and how their everyday life is connected to the oceans.

"Our goal is to protect the environment and pro-

mote a sustainable future and help inspire the future generation of environmental leaders," said Peter Kendrigan, Wheelabrator's southern regional vice president.

Previous environmental activities the students in Rapoza's classes have participated includes planting sea oats, sea grapes, and

mangroves at Birch State Park and at John U. Lloyd Beach State Park in Dania Beach; analyzing turtle nesting trends; cleaning various beaches and also built monofilament fishing line collection bins.

Along with getting a hands-on experience, Rapoza said the field experiments also help introduce

the students to the variety of career fields in marine science and that seeing their results matter also makes a difference to the students.

"That's what makes it more exciting because they feel when they're out there working, they're really doing something useful," Rapoza said.

