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Oaks of Angleton

It's no trick to save the earth

By Mary Openshaw
The Facts

Published April 13, 2008

When magician John Maverick starts his Eco Show, one of his first feats is turning an old scrap of newsprint into a whole paper.

"It repairs itself," Maverick said.

Not a bad illustration of what happens when people recycle, and a good fit for a pre-Earth Day event like Lake Jackson's Envirofest, happening from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday at Brazos Mall.

Earth Day is April 22, but most community events are being held early, taking advantage of April weekends.

"For a lot of people, (Earth Day) is the big conservation time of year," said Tom Schneider, outdoor recreation planner for the Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex. "It's like spring cleaning; you get out and do something for conservation or wildlife. I think more and more people are getting into it as time goes on. I remember the first Earth Day, and it's come a long way from that."

Envirofest activities focus on protecting the environment. The event will feature a free tree giveaway in honor of Arbor Day (April 25) and offer e-waste recycling, i.e. recycling electronics such as TVs, computers and VCRs. Also, a number of nonprofit environmental groups will have booths set up that day. And of course, there will be the recycling magician.

Maverick's Eco Show is popular with elementary schools and organizations around the state throughout April, especially during the week before Earth Day, he said.

"It's directed mainly at elementary school students and teaching them about their choices: reducing, reusing and recycling," Maverick said. "Instead of saying, 'This is what you have to do for the Earth,' it's saying why we should recycle; stressing that you can't always recycle, and giving them hints about how to start a recycling program, even if it's in their own classroom."

The magic is meant to drive the point home, but isn't essential to the show.

"I feel like I could do this entire show without a single magic trick, but I'm very ADD, and I know that if the kids have twice the attention span I do, they're going to lose track of what's going on," Maverick said.

An Austin resident, Maverick has always cared about being environmentally friendly. Now he's sharing that zeal with his audiences.

"The more research I've done, the more numbers I found out, it was just something I had to share with all these kids," Maverick said. "I'm very excited to do the show now. I feel like I'm making a difference."

Local outdoor organizations also are making a difference by teaching people to appreciate the wildlife around them.

Migration Celebration, a yearly program at the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge put on by Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuge, wraps up today. Like Earth Day, it focuses on education and conservation.



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David Plunkett, the event’s co-chairman, hopes people enjoyed the three-day event enough to continue caring about native plants and animals all year.

“There’s lots of good things going on and lots of experts out there trying to show people what we have in the area as far as both plants and animals — the wildlife and the habitat,” he said. “One of the things is educating local people about what we have just 15 or 20 minutes from your house. There are things you can go see. Hopefully they’ll learn a little about the different plants and animals, but also be interested in preserving the habitat so we can have plants and animals around for a long time.”

EARTH DAY EVERY DAY

Earth Day is April 22, but most community events focused on Earth Day have been scattered throughout April. There are ways to be mindful of the planet every day.

- Take reusable shopping totes along when shopping and avoid the paper vs. plastic issue. Plastic bags take as long as 1,000 years to biodegrade and paper bags generate more air and water pollutants than plastic.
- With gasoline prices refusing to dip below \$3 per gallon, save fuel — and reduce pollutants — by turning off your vehicle’s engine when idling for more than 10 seconds.
- Recycle. The energy saved by recycling one aluminum can would power a TV for three hours.

Source: Planet Green, a subsidiary of Discovery Communication.

PARTY FOR THE PLANET

The Houston Zoo is one of more than 100 zoos and aquariums across the country participating in Party for the Planet in honor of Earth Day. From 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. next Saturday and Sunday, zoo activities will include live music, keeper chats about various animals and various recycling programs, including a recycling juggler. Learn more at www.houstonzoo.org.

IT’S MAGIC

Learn more about magician John Maverick at [theeco show.com](http://theeco.show.com) or www.john-maverick.com.

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