

Earth Day from 1A

"We will be located outdoors off the boardwalk next to our amazing river," Miltenberger said. "There will be booths representing many aspects of our environment, including many activities that will involve and educate our children. Also, there will be information on whales, poetry, music, dance, hopefully drums and I even heard rumors about costumes."

The first "Earth Day" was the brainchild of Wisconsin Sen. Gaylord Nelson and took place mostly on college campuses. Nelson was a World War II veteran, a three-term senator and a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

He envisioned the day as a sort of environmental teach-in and convinced students, faculty and administrators on more than 2,000 campuses across the

nation to participate.

It wasn't until a few years later that Florence had its first hint of non-traditional environmental awareness.

Stu Henderson, a recent transplant at the time, thought it might be good for people to take better care of the river and the ocean.

"The water in the river was dirty and there were very few fish or birds around. The pollution created by decades of industrial production had contaminated the Siuslaw River and many locations on the banks of the river, and I just wanted to tell people what was going on, in a mellow way," he said.

Henderson is now a well-known artist in his own right, but at the time he had just finished working with renowned lithographer, Robert Rauschenberg, in L.A.

Henderson had spent three

years learning lithography, a type of printing, while working at the same studio as Rauschenberg. During that time, Rauschenberg created what was to become the iconic poster for the first Earth Day.

A few years later, Henderson and his wife Joanne moved to Florence. The couple were disappointed that there was no local recognition of what had become a major nation-wide event.

So Henderson created a simple, hand-painted poster for Earth Day, and hung it at the end of Bay Street, facing Highway 101.

That was the area's first Earth Day event.

There were a few attempts at organizing some form of official event over the next three decades, but these efforts never came to fruition in a sustained way.

That will change this year as

organizers said the festival is geared towards educating the next generation to the importance of safeguarding the planet from degradation.

Henderson is pleased to see a more comprehensive event to educate the public and feels the effort will be rewarded.

"I am glad that there will be a more robust effort to share information and to network with members of the community about things that not only impact us but will have a long-term effect on later generations," he said.

Miltenberger also wants the community to be aware of other activities that will be held on or around Earth Day, which will showcase different aspects of the broad-based efforts she feels are necessary to educate people and to protect the planet.

"We want to encourage people to take advantage of all of

the other earth related events that are happening this weekend. These include the Siuslaw Cyclists Earth Day ride and activities at Honeyman Park," she said. "Vision Quest is presenting a series on birds at the library on Saturday morning, a bird watch on Sunday and there is a free screening of the film, 'Wasted! The Story of Food Waste' on Thursday at City Lights Cinemas."

Miltenberger is also encouraged by the participation of other local groups.

"Businesses and organizations are still joining our cause but these are the ones, so far, who are either participating in a booth or in donating goods and services," she said, listing Shipping Solutions, the Rhody Express and taxi service, the Florence ORganizes Environmental Team, Florence Master Recyclers, the Siuslaw Chapter of Surfriders, EMAC,

Central Coast Bee Keepers Association, Healthcare for All Oregon Florence Chapter, Florence Food Share and Oregon Wild.

Primarily, Miltenberger wants to provide a fun, informative event that will educate, entertain and inspire discussion and, ultimately, action.

"The most important thing the public can do is come, check us out and bring children and grandchildren to participate in our hands on activities," she said. "Public participation is our big motivation for doing this in upcoming years. People can also bring old cell phones, ink cartridges, and bubble wrap to recycle. Bring a chair if you plan to stay a while and enjoy our large variety of entertainment."

For more information on Sunday's Earth Day Festival, call 503-705-0310.

Volunteers from 1A

Oregon Coast Military Museum

Filled with hundreds of pieces of authentic memorabilia from the five U.S. armed services displayed in carefully crafted exhibitions, the Oregon Coast Military Museum (OCMM) has been recounting the history of military service to Florence residents and visitors. People who stop by the museum can browse the gift shop, view the displays or get a guided tour by one of the many docents who volunteer at the museum — one of whom is James Dale Guy.

"I'm just a plain old guy, but I go by Dale," Guy said.

A former Marine, the Oregon native came to Florence by way of Bend, after retiring from a long career as a salesman for Sysco Corporation, a food distribution company for restaurants.

"It was a good job and the food industry was good to me, as you can see," Guy said, patting his belly. "Then I retired and lived in Bend, but it gets cold over there in the winter. As I got older, I didn't like shoveling snow."

Guy and his wife found their way to Florence three years ago to get away from the weather. They've been happy here ever since.

"This is a really great town, especially for people my age," he said. "Keep it a secret, don't tell anyone."

When he arrived in town, Guy began to look for places to volunteer.

"You can always sit around so long before you have to do something," Guy said. "The Lord and the world have been good to me, and Oregon has been good to me, and I've got to give back."

He saw an article in the newspaper about OCMM and thought it would be a good fit, given his background.

He had enlisted in the Marine Corps just out of high school, not wanting to go into the Navy because he "liked the ground," he said. The Marines had other plans for him.

"Yeah, they put me on a Navy Ship. I was sailing over all the places in the South Pacific as a radio telegraph operator, taking Morse code," he said. "I was a cryptographer, deciphering some coded messages from other countries during the Cold War."

Using his background and love of history, Guy has been giving tours to OCMM visitors since last summer and the job keeps him on his toes.

"The tour starts with the Civil War and First World War, and works around to Vietnam," Guy explained. "I've been given some study stuff to answer the questions that the people have."

"Let's take the visitors who were in the Air Force. They're looking at the Air Force stuff, and they're going to be critical. They want to make sure that that's authentic stuff. Same with the Marines and Army. You

learn a lot from the people that come in."

The museum is run almost entirely by volunteers of all ages, except one paid position. Volunteers like Guy take the information the visitors give and constantly upgrade the displays to ensure authenticity.

It's that constant learning that makes him feel fulfilled, he said.

"I think history should be important to everybody because what we're doing today, in effect it happened in the past. History affects our politics. That's how it affects me. You can understand a little bit what's going on today because of what happened in the past, some good, some not so good."

And Guy thinks museums are the best place to learn history. The majority of the items on display in the museum, he explained, are either donated or loaned by people's own collections.

"Stuff that community members collected from their parents or grandparents, they've been very generous to share it with everyone, which is really nice," he said. "This stuff goes way back to the Civil War."

And it's that authenticity that gives museums a real sense of history, beyond the pages of a book.

"You can touch it," Guy said. "You can read all sorts of books, but a lot of that is opinions, in my estimation. You can read five books about Vietnam, but unless you can see the actual things, or talk to people that were there, you need authenticity."

Guy pointed to the newly installed Coast Guard exhibit at OCMM as an example of why

the museum is important to Florence, which has recently been designated a U.S. Coast Guard City due to the area's strong partnership with Coast Guard Station Siuslaw River.

"We had kind of a token display of the Coast Guard, but now we've enhanced it," Guy said. "We've got a lot of stuff here from the Coast Guard. We have uniforms and films you can sit down and listen to the whole story of the Coast Guard."

The museum just doesn't tell the story of the military, it's an ever-evolving history of the people in the region, and a testament to those volunteers who make it run.

"This would be a sad place if we didn't have volunteers, it really would be," Guy said. "I think volunteers in this town keep it going."

"I think that volunteering helps the community be stable. You see it in all facets of our community. My wife volunteers at Habitat for Humanity. It's needed. Most of those people that volunteer, they do it because they care. They're not doing it for money."

Instead, they do it because they want a better place to live.

"Look at the people who clean up the beach," Guy said. "They do it because they want a nice beach. You can see people are picking up trash because they care. This is a pretty neat little town, a well-kept secret."

"Don't tell anyone."

Helping Hands Coalition

"We named ourselves 'Funday Friday,'" Jo-Anna Thies said. "It's the best crew, we get along, everybody knows what needs to get done so nobody

needs to tell anyone what to do. We get the most compliments on food and us and we love it."

Thies was working the Friday afternoon shift with four other volunteers for the Helping Hands Coalition, an organization with one simple goal: helping.


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