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# Earth Day a daily commitment for Pacifica man

By Julia Scott San Mateo County Times Posted: 04/14/2010 07:08:00 PM PDT Updated: 04/14/2010 11:16:44 PM PDT

PACIFICA — Nearly every day is Earth Day for Ian Butler and his "secret waterfall" — a cliffside stormwater outfall pipe that spews litter into the ocean and along a beach Butler cleans up most days of the week.

"It's death by a thousand cuts," Butler, 49, said of the debris. "It's all the drains in Daly City and Pacifica, and every time it rains a few pieces of litter get sucked in."

The first time Butler saw the secret waterfall, which spills from a cliff well off the beaten track at the westernmost border between Daly City and Pacifica, the beach was covered in piles of plastic and muck several feet deep. Frogs were jumping over the trash.

It took Butler and a group of friends two weeks to clean it all up. And the next time it rained, the beach was again covered in plastic bags, bottles, Styrofoam, junk food wrappers and cigarette butts.

"I thought, either I give up or keep going," Butler recalled. "And now it's like I've adopted this puppy, and I can't let it go. I'm committed forever."

Butler's story exemplifies both the spirit of Earth Day and its limitations. As residents across San Mateo County gather for their own volunteer projects to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, it's clear that the work to be done far exceeds the one day a year officially devoted to efforts such as trash pickup and removal of invasive plants — or two days a year, counting Coastal Cleanup Day.

The Pacifica Beach Coalition hopes to make the most of the time by involving every Pacifica resident in a planned cleanup of six beaches, 10 streets and nearly every school in the city on Saturday, April 24, two days after Earth Day's official observance.

Other cities are planning events for this weekend, including Redwood City's Earth Day on the Bay at the Marine Science Institute this Saturday.

Earth Day may come only once a year, but it's the best way to get kids into the habit of taking responsibility for their own consumption, said Lynn Adams, president of the Pacifica Beach Coalition.

Adams, 50, remembers the first Earth Day 40 years ago.

"I was 10 years old, and my mother said, 'OK, you guys, here's some gunny sacks. You need to go clean the street.' We'd never done it before, but we did it every Earth Day since," she said.

Butler himself never celebrated Earth Day until two years ago, after he got involved in cleaning up the beach next to his secret waterfall.

"First you have to get people going from zero days (a year) to one," he said. "Hopefully, when people do a few of those cleanups, they start to see the litter — at first you can walk by and not see it. Now I go everywhere and I see it."

Contact Julia Scott at 650-348-4340.

## DO YOUR PART

Celebrate the 40th anniversary of Earth Day with a variety of activities, including cleanups, nature walks and garden tours.

### Brisbane

Come remove invasive exotic plants from Costanos Canyon from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. April 24. Wear work clothes and sturdy shoes, and bring gloves if you have them. Tools, food and drink provided. The park is located at Humboldt Road and Placer Way.

### Burlingame

Help clean up Brisbane Lagoon from 9 a.m. to noon April 24. To sign up, contact Eva Justimbaste or Muriel Carrier at 650-342-3727. Sign-in located on Lagoon Trail off Anza Boulevard.

### Foster City

Foster City's Environmental Sustainability Task Force presents a daylong celebration from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 25 with workshops on gray water and solar as well as garden demos and e-waste recycling. Food and children's activities provided. City Hall Plaza, intersection of Hillsdale and Foster City boulevards.

### Menlo Park

Leave the car at home and earn prizes by participating in the second annual "Drive Less Challenge" in Menlo Park, Burlingame, Palo Alto and Mountain View from April 22 to May 5. Menlo Park pioneered the event in 2009. For details, visit [www.drivelesschallenge.com](http://www.drivelesschallenge.com).

### Millbrae

Celebrate Earth Day and Arbor Day by planting trees, weeding, mulching and picking up litter at Monterey Park from 10 a.m. to noon April 24. Refreshments provided. The park is on Monterey Street between Carter Street and Santa

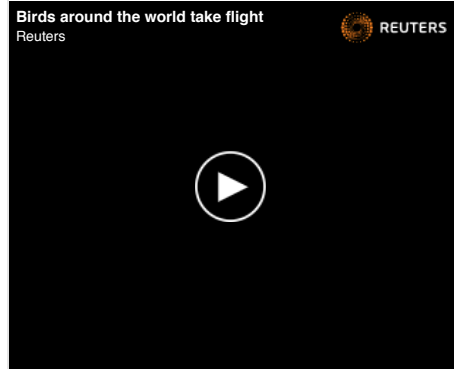
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10 a.m. to noon April 24. Refreshments provided. The park is on Monterey Street between Center Street and Santa Paula Avenue. For more information, call 650-259-2339.

#### Pacifica

Help pick up trash, restore native habitat, and practice gardening skills on April 24 at more than two dozen locations across Pacifica including six beaches, 10 streets and several parks and schools. All events are from 9 to 11:30 a.m. For details, visit [www.pacificabeachcoalition.org](http://www.pacificabeachcoalition.org).

#### Redwood City


Live sea creatures, ocean arts and crafts, and music are part of the Earth Day party at the Marine Science Institute's annual Earth Day celebration, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. April 17. Filmmaker Ron Blatman will present his documentary, Saving the Bay, and the institute will offer two-hour boat trips on the Bay. Visit [www.sfbaymsi.org/earthday.html](http://www.sfbaymsi.org/earthday.html) for details.

#### San Mateo

The Coyote Point Museum will focus on food sustainability and urban farming for its special Earth Day program from noon to 5 p.m. April 18. Details at [www.coyoteptmuseum.org/earthday](http://www.coyoteptmuseum.org/earthday).


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