

Oct. 25, 2007

Get the “GIS-t” of things at GIS Day

Sarasota County showcases one of the coolest tools in its arsenal on Thursday, Nov. 1, with a day-long look at its geographic information system, also known as GIS. From 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Phillippi Estate Park will become a living laboratory of rooms featuring everything from how GIS is used to monitor and plan for natural disasters to live GIS presentations and map displays. The event, which takes place at 5500 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, is free and open to the public.

GIS is a system for capturing, managing, analyzing and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information. GIS Day is part of the National Geographic Society’s Geography Awareness Week, which draws attention to the application and benefits of GIS technology.

“Sarasota County recently acquired new GIS data and innovative tools that help us better understand our customers and neighborhoods in relation to locations of services provided by local government,” said Chris Higham, a county GIS analyst. “It is amazing how the unique mix of demographic, socioeconomic, and business data we can now analyze, model, and visualize gives us valuable and intuitive insights into our customers.”

One of those tools, called Community Tapestry, helps identify areas that are underserved to tailor services to meet growing population needs. But Higham says that’s just the start.

Ever wonder what your house looks like from outer space? During GIS Day, find out in the Google Earth Room, where county staff will explain how data collected here finds its way onto the Internet.

How much room do you really take up here on earth? The Ecological Footprint Room will show how your lifestyle impacts the planet, and how you can reduce its effect.

Analyst Kathy Van Kirk says one of the more recent applications of GIS in the last two years has been educating adults who are using GPS technology during elaborate scavenger hunts. Not one to lag behind the curve, the county will host an outdoor GIS scavenger hunt for adults and school-age children during GIS Day. There will also be refreshments, raffles and giveaways.

For more information about Sarasota County’s use of GIS, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask for Planning and Development Services or visit scgov.net and click on services, then GIS.