

June 4, 2008

Sarasota County takes a hike June 7 for National Trails Day

Trails require endless hours of planning, labor and negotiation to build, then ongoing maintenance for public use. To celebrate the many trails that enrich the lives of Sarasota County residents, the county is joining local governments and municipalities throughout the country for National Trails Day, Saturday, June 7.

National Trails Day was launched in 1993 to bring public awareness to the approximately 200,000 miles of trails that exist in the United States. It is the result of former President Ronald Reagan's Commission on American Outdoors' recommendation that every citizen have immediate access to trails in their cities or towns.

"This is a great way to recognize the many people and partners who have helped make our own trails possible," said Sarasota County Public Use Coordinator Brie Ondercin. "It builds support for our trails and introduces people to their many joys and benefits."

Sarasota County offers many outdoor recreational opportunities on a variety of trails, including water trails along the Myakka River and Dona and Roberts bays, paved trails like the 10.6-mile Legacy Trail and Venetian Waterway Trail, or more natural paths like the 18-mile Myakka Island Wilderness Trail. Sarasota County also has 61 miles of equestrian trails.

"These trails allow us access to the natural world for recreation, education, exploration, solitude, inspiration and so much more," said Ondercin. "They afford opportunities for physical and mental health by providing us fresh air, exercise and escape from the stress of living daily in an urban setting."

In 2006, the Outdoor Industry Association's annual Outdoor Participation Study reported that 72 percent of all American adults participated in at least one of 22 outdoor activities on the nation's trails, including 76.7 million hiking, 13.5 million backpacking, 40.4 million running and 10 million cross country skiing.

For more information about Sarasota County's trails, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask for Natural Resources.