Lives on the Line - Rookery Bay Reaches Out to Beachgoers and Boaters

For more than two years, Rookery Bay’s “Lives on the Line” outreach members have hit the sand with important information for beachgoers and boaters on Rookery Bay’s most popular and heavily trafficked beaches – Keewaydin Island. The team spreads the word about thoughtful, respectful beach going and boating as well as the danger of leaving fishing line and marine debris behind after a day at the beach. The Rookery Bay “Lives on the Line” campaign is an opportunity for Rookery Bay staff and volunteers to engage with visitors in a family-friendly way and inform them of the importance of debris removal.

To kick off the 2023 tourism season, staffers Morgan Zeleny, Gabriel Leal and Donna Young and volunteers from Rookery Bay’s Team OCEAN boater outreach program connected with more than 100 people. Some kids played a casting game with staff and information was shared about the dangers of fishing line left behind to birds and marine mammals such as manatees and dolphins. Wildlife often mistake fishing line for food and ingest it becoming seriously ill. Pelicans and other birds can become entangled in line and be unable to fly.

Rookery Bay Research Reserve Environmental Education Program Spotlighted in Collier County Public Schools’ Promotion

Collier County Public Schools (CCPS) captured Rookery Bay educators and students from Highlands Elementary on film during the popular and longstanding 4th grade Estuary Explorer program. Education Coordinator Sarah Falkowski answered questions from the CCPS reporter and narrated the action as the education team led students through activities including a search for critters in an oyster cluster, examination of tiny plankton under a microscope and taking water samples from the overlook bridge.

After more than two years without field trips, Collier County Public Schools was excited to get back to Rookery Bay and have the opportunity to film the hands-on science of the students. They will also be taping field trips on the beaches and water with the 7th grade Survivors program soon as well as high school marine sciences classes. Collier County Schools plans to promote the programs on social media and throughout the school system to encourage teachers to bring their classes to the Reserve to learn more about estuaries, the local wildlife and waters of coastal Collier County.
National Estuarine Research Reserve Education

Change on the Ground in 2022

**Connects**
People to Estuaries

1 million+ ACRES of natural classrooms & living laboratories with

26 INTERPRETIVE CENTERS

Hello to the Connecticut Reserve, designated in 2022!

296,131 VISITORS learn about estuaries through Research Reserve outreach & education

**Prepares**
the Next Generation

54,773 STUDENTS take learning out of the abstract & into the outdoors

4,347 TEACHERS are trained in the estuary & supported in the classroom

**SKILLS BUILT**
- Observation
- Asking research questions
- Problem solving
- Data driven decision making

**Improves**
the Environment

10,570 CITIZENS are trained & inspired to protect their coasts & estuaries

30 RESEARCH RESERVE EDUCATORS lead programs that foster coastal stewardship in communities in 25 states

Creating value through education
37,371 volunteer hours = $1,119,261*

*Value of a volunteer hour is calculated at $29.95 based on data from the Independent Sector.

cost.noaa.gov/estuaries