

Kid eco-crusaders tackle invaders one park at a time!

July 3, 2007 (Fort Lauderdale, FL) – Wednesday, June 27th volunteer children and adults with The Kids Ecology Corps spent the morning at Tree Tops Park in Davie removing invasive exotic vines from the park's Live Oak trees. Armed with extra large work gloves and hand pruners, the kids went to work cutting, tugging and pulling the overgrown Muscadine grapevines, exotic Air Potato vines and Rosary Pea vines that had climbed up and over the forty foot Oaks, suffocating them. Ryan Goldman, Park Naturalist at Tree Tops Park explained to the kids and adult volunteers how detrimental the vines were to the oaks and other native plants in the park. Goldman continued, "This vine has already done a great deal of damage to this tree," he said, pointing to a giant air potato vine that had grown to over three inches in diameter and hundreds of feet long. "and using pesticides will not only kill the vines but the tree underneath as well. So the only thing for us to do is to manually remove the suffocating vines." Because of the growth rate of these invasives, Tree Tops park welcomes the help of volunteer organizations like The Kids Ecology Corps. "Without volunteers like you" said Goldman, "the lives of these trees would be in jeopardy."

Invasive plants pose one of the biggest threats to our natural environment, destroying habitat and food for wildlife. Free from the array of natural controls present in their native lands, exotic plants often experience rapid and unrestricted growth in new environments. When this happens, native plants can get crowded out, even to the point of extinction.

"Cleaning up that tree means the animals can live there again." said 9 year old John Seck of Fort Lauderdale after spending three hours removing the invasive vines and digging out their roots from the base of the trees. "We did something to save the environment today! Didn't we? We did good work!" he says with a big smile, dragging away a removed section of vine as thick as his arm. "Wow! Now we can see the tree again!" said eight year old Jon Sherman, looking up at the once hidden tree. "That was so much fun!"

Invasive plant removal and habitat restoration are several of the many community action and educational projects taken on by The Kids Ecology Corps, a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization whose mission is to inspire young people to make environmental action part of their everyday lives and in the lives of those around them. KEC has reached over 55,000 young people from pre-k through high school, offering unique hands-on presentations and eco-action programs that educate children and youth about: keeping our oceans clean; the importance of trees; the role re-planting our coastal wetlands plays in beach conservation; water conservation; pollution prevention; global warming and energy conservation; and, protecting local natural habitats for native wildlife. Visit them at www.kidsecologycorps.org or contact The Kids Ecology Corps at kec@kidsecologycorps.org. Emily Nell Lagerquist, Executive Director and her team can be reached at Tel.: 954-524-0366 to volunteer or to schedule an education or eco-action presentation at your school.

Visit Tree Tops Park at 3900 SW 100th Avenue in Davie and check out their website at www.broward.org/parks.

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