

# Encouraging stewardship

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- Photo by APRIL FEAGLEY



Huntingdon County Conservation District manager Celina Seftas helped Leo Fether learn about macroinvertebrates during an Earth Day celebration Saturday at Blair Park in Huntingdon.

An Earth Day celebration was held under brilliantly-blue skies Saturday in Blair Park, marking the official opening of the historic space for the season.

Earth Day is an annual event which is celebrated today, Monday, April 22. Founded in 1970, the date is set aside in 193 countries around the globe as a time to honor the Earth and the concept of peace.

“We host the Earth Day event annually,” said organizer Brent Rader. “It’s always around Earth Day, as close to the date as we can get it.”

The proximity of the event to the holiday weekend decreased attendance, but did not put a damper on the enthusiasm.

“This year, it hasn’t been as busy as in past years because it fell on Easter weekend,” Rader said. “Last year, we were much busier and hopefully it will be next year, too.”

Environmental activities included bike riding, hiking, healthy foods and pollinator and water-quality education.

“We usually try to get people to come and do demonstrations,” he said. “We have Larry Mutti here to talk about bees and we have Celina Seftas from the Conservation District here to talk about water and we have Shane Fether here from Big Brothers, Big Sisters to talk about bikes. We try to focus on things that are sustainable and get people to come and have a display and talk about it. We want to try to raise awareness of sustainable practices and things like that.”

Seftas’ display of macroinvertebrates, including a carnivorous water beetle and other water-dwelling insects, proved to be a popular feature for many of the young park-goers Saturday.

“It’s important to get kids and adults involved in Earth Day because there are a lot of things that each one of us can do for conservation,” Seftas said.

Kids, in particular, can get involved in environmental efforts through making small changes that create a huge impact.

“Kids can help their kids with recycling, they can pick up litter, they can plant trees,” she said. “One of the things we are learning about today is the fact that trees along a stream help all of these macroinvertebrates. Kids can go fishing and enjoy recreation in nature.”

Getting youngsters involved early sets the stage for a lifetime of caring for the world around them.

“It creates a stewardship model,” said Seftas. “It makes conservation a lifestyle.”

The historic park, originally created around a carriage path which traveled parallel to Stone Creek, was selected as the location for the annual Earth Day observance for its beauty and its longtime use as a public space.

“Part of it is to raise awareness of the park as a local resource,” said Rader. “A lot of people aren’t super familiar with Blair Park. They know it’s here, but they’re not sure what we have. It’s a way to get people into the park and get them back the trail. We want them to check it out. It’s here for the community.”