

Eat, drink, play, learn

Santa Barbara's historic Earth Day Festival is under way

By **KELLY HOOVER**
NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

The spirit of Earth Day appears the moment you walk through the entrance at Alameda Park, where the Earth Day Festival kicked off Saturday.

Attendees were urged to get to the festival without using a car, and hundreds cruised in on bicycles and valet parked, thanks to volunteers with the Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition.

Ed France, executive director of the coalition, estimated volunteers parked more than 1,000 bikes last year, and because the percentage of people riding bikes in Santa Barbara is growing, he expects that number to significantly increase.

"You never have this many bikes in one place unless it is a racing event," he said. "Being able to ride out to an event that is eco-conservative is what Santa Barbara is all about."

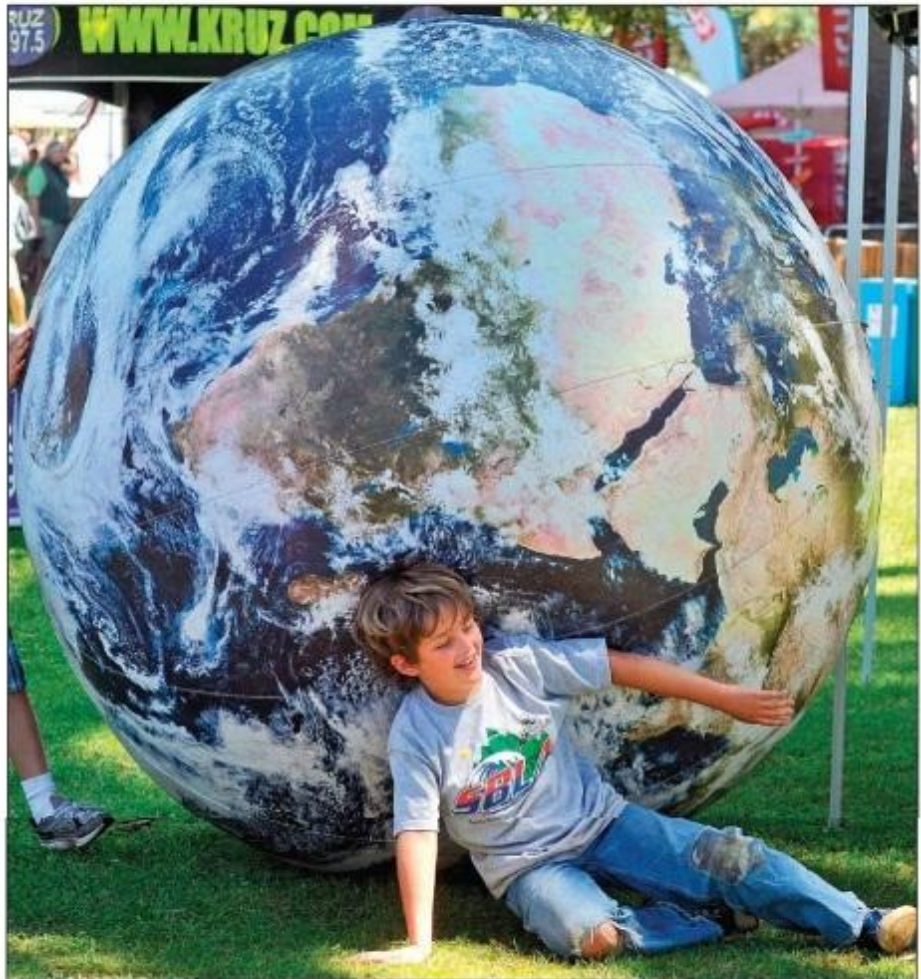
For Jenny VanSeters, an avid Santa Barbara cyclist who volunteered as a valet, it's a great way to spend the day.

"It's fun, you meet people, you see all different types of bikes and people are in a good mood," Ms. VanSeters said. "There is a certain energy you get when you bike to an event like this."

Santa Barbara neighbors Laurie Bassett and Kimmie Coley rode eight

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MIKE ELIASON/NEWS-PRESS

Luca Hill, 9, has the weight of the world on his shoulders as he is run over by an inflatable Earth during the Earth Day Festival on Saturday.

Organizers say Earth Day event is the largest on the West Coast



MIKE ELIASON / NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS

Visitors pack the Earth Day Festival on Saturday at Alameda Park.

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blocks to the festival and were impressed with what they saw.

"I really enjoy Santa Barbara because there is such community collaboration," Ms. Coley said. "A lot of communities don't have this."

In fact, Santa Barbara was the first city to put on an Earth Day celebration. Concerned citizens started the very first one in 1969 following a devastating oil spill off the South Coast.

Amy Reidel, a Santa Barbara resident and author of children's books, was surprised to learn the history behind the event in its 42nd year. "I did not know that," she said. "Wow, I just got the chills."

Mrs. Reidel looks forward to Earth Day every year. "It's a great template to show people what they can do to be environmentally friendly. It's fun but educational along the way. I've seen it change and become more sophisticated. Year after year it gets better."

The Community Environmental Coalition has organized the event since its inception and says it is the largest on the West Coast.

Dave Davis, executive director of the coalition, said it's a reflection of the people who live here and the reputation they have built.

"We are on the cutting edge of a sustainable, healthy community movement," he said. "We started recycling, we were ahead of the organic gardening movement, we opened the first household hazardous waste center and we are moving the region off of fossil fuels by promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency."

Mr. Davis said the community is well on its way to achieving the organization's goal of having the Central



that has a Green Car Show, which is pretty unique for an Earth Day festival," said Ford tour program manager Brady Clark.

Santa Barbara resident Andrew Fuller, who drives a Toyota Prius and has owned hybrid cars for the past six years, was the first in line to take the Focus Electric for a spin.

"I liked it, it's quiet, it has substance to it, and the only reservation is the mileage," he said. "I could drive it around town, but if I had to go to L.A., it wouldn't work."

Still, Mr. Fuller, a 48-year-old real estate investor, would consider buying it as a car to use around town if the price was right.

"You can buy a more economical car, but I like supporting the concept so it can continue to evolve," he said.

Goleta resident Katie Davis owns a Nissan Leaf electric car already but wanted to see some of the other cars. She hopes this is a trend that will take off sooner rather than later.

"The stakes are higher this Earth Day," Ms. Davis said. "We are talking about changing the climate of our Earth in some irreversible ways."

In addition to her electric car, the mother of two and Citrix employee has solar panels on her house.

"I am actually saving money," she said. "We have a 5-kilowatt solar system on our roof which powers my car, my house and then some."

"We actually generate more power than we use, so last year we got a check back from Southern California Edison for \$160."

Despite the savings, for Ms. Davis



Ella Stephens-Green, 3, plays the character of Rapunzel during the Earth Day Festival.

ment are provided throughout the two-day event.

A highlight takes place on the main stage today at 1:30 p.m., when the Environmental Hero Award for 2012 will be announced. This year the recipient is the late Selma Rubin, a legendary local environmental activist who died in March at the age of 97.

Mr. Davis, who credits Ms. Rubin for his career and calls her the mother of the CEC, said the day will be an emotional one.

"She was the spark plug that created the CEC and many other organizations after the oil spill," he said. "She was tireless in working toward the betterment of Santa Barbara. We encourage the community to accept the award in Selma's honor and pledge to carry on her legacy."

nization's goal of having the Central Coast free of fossil fuels by 2033.

The festival's popular Green Car Show, featuring about 50 new electric and hybrid vehicles, is an important spot for car manufacturers to show off their latest models.

Ford chose Santa Barbara as the first stop on its national tour to debut the new Ford Focus Electric.

"Santa Barbara has a great Earth Day history and we wanted to launch our new car at a great festival and one

Despite the savings, for Ms. Davis, being eco-friendly is not about the money. "For me, it's about reducing emissions," she said.

In addition to Bike World and the Green Car Show, the Earth Day festival is packed with 250 booths, some informative and others selling environmentally friendly products. The event includes a kids' area, a food, beer and wine garden featuring local and organic products, and the main stage, where music and entertain-

to carry on her legacy."

Last year, actress Daryl Hannah took home the award, and the year prior it went to movie director James Cameron.

The Earth Day Festival is free to the public. Hours today are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Alameda Park is located at 1400 Santa Barbara St.

For more information about the event go to www.sbearthday.org.

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