



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
APRIL 22, 2008

CONTACT: GOVERNOR'S PRESS OFFICE  
(850) 488-5394

## Governor Crist Celebrates Earth Day at the Capitol

~ 39th celebration of Earth Day promotes environmental awareness with students ~

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist and Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp today joined Florida Education Commissioner Eric J. Smith, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Michael W. Sole, Florida Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and nearly 1,000 area students to commemorate the 39th celebration of Earth Day at the Capitol. The theme for this year's celebration is Celebrating Environmental Citizenship in Our Community, At Home, At Work and At School.

"Earth Day encourages our children to develop environmental citizenship at an early age and learn about protecting our natural resources and quality of life," said Governor Crist. "Our students are our future, and helping them make scientifically-informed decisions is vital to having a healthy and productive environment and economy."

DEP and the Florida Department of Education's (DOE) Florida Learn and Serve program partnered with a number of federal, state, local and community organizations to host booths, exhibits and informational programs during Earth Day at the Capitol. Activities and exhibits include:

- \* A scavenger hunt with DEP's Office of Environmental Education. The program also distributed reusable bags and tree saplings as well as smoothies made by a solar-powered blender.
- \* Information and recipes to make "green cleaning" supplies from DEP's Sustainable Initiatives program.
- \* A touch tank with horseshoe crabs, snails and hermit crabs from DEP's Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas.
- \* An informational exhibit about the Osborne Reef Waste Tire Cleanup project in South Florida as well as activity making recycled paper from DEP's Division of Waste Management.
- \* Project sewing oyster mats used in environmental restoration projects with The Nature Conservancy.

- \* Activity showing visitors how to recycle yard and kitchen scraps through composting with Leon County Recycling and Education.
- \* Exhibit from DOE's Florida Learn and Serve displaying student service learning projects from around the state.

"On Earth Day we recognize the important role education and science can play in environmental protection," said DEP Secretary Sole. "Geologists and other scientists provide much needed information to make informed decisions while educators encourage today's youth to become responsible environmental stewards."

Florida Learn and Serve is a federally sponsored grants program managed by the Florida Department of Education that awards grants to schools and school districts to engage youth in service learning. The program brought approximately 100 students from across the state to Earth Day to display their Service Learning Projects.

"The preservation of our natural environment is a critical responsibility that our children will soon inherit," said DOE Commissioner Smith. "We must do all that we can to educate and prepare them for this challenge to ensure that future generations are able to experience the many wonders our planet has to offer."

The celebration of Earth Day recognizes the important role education and science can play in environmental protection. The first official Earth Day was held in 1970. With the mission of uniting the world toward a common cause of environmental protection and conservation, the United Nations observed the first global Earth Day with the annual ringing of the Peace Bell on March 21, 1971.

Later today, Governor Crist will join Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts at the Governor's Mansion to plant a tree. The scouts participating in the planting have earned the Serve to Preserve Scout Award announced by the Governor in February. The Serve to Preserve Scout Award program allows scout troops to earn an award insignia by completing educational activities about Florida's natural environment.

For more information on Earth Day activities and environmental protection in Florida, visit [www.dep.state.fl.us](http://www.dep.state.fl.us) <<http://www.dep.state.fl.us/>> .