

### Artists plant the seeds of action



On April 22, 1970, a Dead Orange march wound its way through downtown Miami. On people's minds that day was air pollution, saving the Everglades, and sewage in our waterways.

It was Miami's first Earth Day.

Since then some positive changes have come: The Clean Air Act passed. Everglades restoration became a thing. The Miami Beach sewage outfall pipe was closed.

Now, however, there's an even greater sense of urgency about the environment. Wild species on land and the seas are declining precipitously, leading to extinctions. Carbon emissions have increased 2.4 times, causing a rise in temperatures and rising sea levels as sea ice melts. The Everglades has not been saved and, in fact, is now threatened by saltwater intrusion, pollution, and encroaching development. And sewage spills continue from leaky pipes and storm water pumps.

Given all this, can Earth Day be a day of celebration in 2018? And where can we turn for hope?

Artists say, look to them. In Miami, dancers and poets are coming together in the sublime light

of the beach this Earth month in celebration -- and also in hope.

“Dance can be so many things,” says Dale Andree, founder and artistic director of the National Water Dance that will be performed April 14 at the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center on Key Biscayne. Andree grew up around water and says she always felt close to nature. But it was dance that brought her to a deeper connection and a quest to express that connection through movement.

Andree believes art-in-the-environment is a powerful draw. Her transformative moment came in 1983 with Christo’s *Surrounded Islands*, an art installation that wrapped Biscayne Bay spoil islands in pink fabric. The artist created a scene that drew the eye and moved the spirit to appreciate the natural beauty in our midst where the “the luminous pink color of the shiny fabric was in harmony with the tropical vegetation of the uninhabited verdant islands, the light of the Miami sky and the colors of the shallow waters of Biscayne Bay.”

Andree created her first site-specific performances with the Florida Waterways Dance Project while she was still a dance instructor at the New World School of the Arts. She later founded NWD Projects, a Miami-based dance production company that created the National Water Dance, an international celebration that now features 1500 dancers performing site-specific dances at rivers, bays, lakes, and ocean shores throughout the U.S. and Canada, Mexico, and Puerto Rico.

The National Water Dance also has a poetic element, with students from Miami and Hawaii schools contributing poems about water.

Dancers from Conchita Espinosa Academy and South Miami Community Middle School will join professional dancers, including the IFE-ILE Afro-Cuban Dance Company, on a sandbar at Crandon Beach on Key Biscayne for the dance. The music will come from an original percussion score created by Brandon Cruz, director of the South Florida Center for Percussive Arts.

Andree hopes to stir audience members to dance, too, as they feel the rhythm in the pulsing of the waves, the flapping of birds’ wings, the bounce of ocean breezes on the skin. In time, these deeper connections can lead toward action, she believes.

## Earth Day 2018

Written by Blanca Mesa, BT Contributor  
April 2018

---

“You have to move people first to care, to connect people in a deeper way, and then the next steps will happen. We’re building something,” Andree says.

This year, go ahead take a day to celebrate Planet Earth. Dance on the beach. Make that connection to water, to sky, to earth. Then go out and fight for it so we may all have something to celebrate on future Earth Days.

The National Water Dance takes place at 4:00 p.m. Saturday, April 14, at the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center in Crandon Park, Key Biscayne. There will be a mini-workshop on climate change in the center’s gallery at 2:30 p.m.

April is also National Poetry Month and the O, Miami Poetry Project has several nature-inspired activities planned, including “Ocean Stanzas,” where Miami-Dade students visiting the Douglas Nature Center will write short ocean- or nature-inspired poems.

At Matheson Hammock Park there will be a guided session of “Deep Listening” to connect the senses to the surrounding environment. Participants will be asked to create a poem or meditation, which will be woven into a collective text. There’s also a “sensory” forest walk.

For more information on more nature-inspired O, Miami Poetry events, visit [www.omiami.org](http://www.omiami.org).

Happy Earth Month!

Feedback: [letters@biscaynetimes.com](mailto:letters@biscaynetimes.com)