**Conservation at heart of Earth Day**

Earth Day is the day we set aside to consider what we can do to protect, preserve, and enhance the only home any of us will ever have. In New Braunfels, the day was observed on Saturday, April 20. Volunteers from the Comal County Conservation Alliance (CCCA) joined with volunteers from many other organizations to share information with people who came out to enjoy a beautiful day — and perhaps, to learn a bit.

Fittingly, the event was held at NBU’s Headwaters of the Comal River site.

This is the point at which water comes to the surface from the Edwards Aquifer at Comal Springs to start the Comal River on its short journey to the Guadalupe River.

The site is appropriate for an Earth Day observance for at least two reasons. The first is the importance of the springs and the aquifer to the life of the area. The aquifer supplies the water that we all use. The springs brought the first settlers to the area, just as they brought Native Americans here. The other major reason it is appropriate is that the site illustrates what can be done to help restore and preserve nature. Not long ago, the site was used by NBU to store trucks and other heavy equipment. Repair shops kept those machines working and fuel pumps kept them going. It could have remained an industrial site, but the city and NBU found another — higher — use for it. Now, it is well on the way to becoming a park and learning center. Walking paths weave through smaller pools and beds of wildflowers.

Visitors learned about the importance of the aquifer and a bit of how it works by looking at maps showing the areas that contribute water, the areas in which the water enters the aquifer and the transition area.

They also viewed the Karst Limestone that makes up the structure of the aquifer. Young people poured water over the porous stone to see how it moves through all of the openings to emerge at another point. They also learned a bit about leaves and fossils by making rubbings.

Several things have underscored the importance of the CCCA’s mission to preserve the land, water, and wildlife of Comal County. The first was a headline and story in the Phoenix newspaper, The Arizona Republic. It listed the fastest growing counties in the nation. Maricopa County, the greater Phoenix area, was number one in absolute growth and Comal County Texas was number two in percentage growth.

The growth of our county was not a surprise to one of the visitors at Earth Day.

A woman in her senior years said that she was a lifelong resident of New Braunfels. She remembered the open fields that were the whole area beyond where Seguin Road meets what is now I-35.

Finally, words from one of CCCA’s Master Naturalists: “When the first settlers came to the area, Comal Springs actually bubbled up like a fountain.

Now we’ve pumped so much water out of the aquifer that the pressure is gone. A lot of the other springs have actually dried up.”

To become a member and/or learn more about the Comal County Conservation Alliance, visit the group’s website, www.comalconservation.org.