



COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT FOR HOME

# Open house Jan. 30, wide-open world of possibilities for the future at the Suncoast Youth Conservation Center

BY BRIAN LOTT    JANUARY 25, 2017

In Florida's theme-park paradise, it can be easy to overlook the smaller attractions that focus on things like environmental education – places that make it fun to learn about the state's unique and fascinating ecosystem while they immerse you in a lush habitat and offer great activities for people of all ages.

Oh, and did we mention the new [Florida Conservation and Technology Center \(FCTC\)](#) also offers free admission? And is hosting an open house at its [Suncoast Youth Conservation Center](#) from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. this Monday, Jan. 30?

FCTC, rising now in Apollo Beach, is a cooperative effort between the [Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission \(FWC\)](#), [The Florida Aquarium](#) and Tampa Electric – whose world-famous [Manatee Viewing Center](#) is itself growing right next door.



Among the many cool interactive exhibits you can see at the SYCC open house, this one lets visitors simulate how varying amounts of rainfall affect a habitat. TECO team members, fresh from work to add native plants to nearby Newman Branch Creek, got a sneak peek at the SYCC late last year.



Kathy Guindon, director of FWC's Suncoast Youth Conservation Center, cuts the ribbon on the SYCC in 2016.

The Suncoast Youth Conservation Center (SYCC), owned by FWC and located at 6650 Dickman Road in Apollo Beach, offers a wide range of things to do, including kayaking, fishing, classroom learning and summer programs for students, hiking, wildlife viewing and more. FWC, TECO, the Aquarium and other community partners dedicated SYCC in 2016.

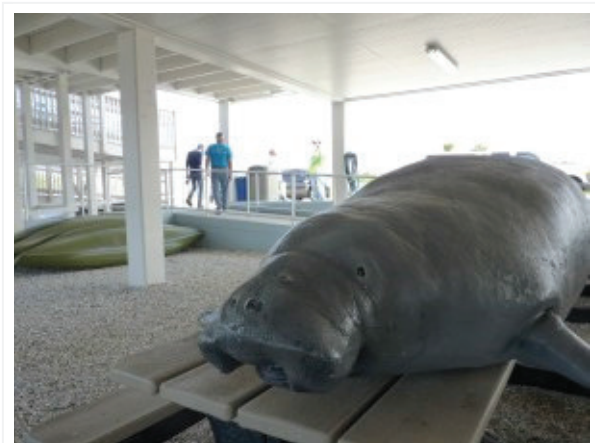
FCTC is at the center of an effort like no other in West Central Florida. In addition to the Manatee Viewing Center – currently enjoying one of the most [exciting seasons](#) in its 30-year history, with manatee sightings aplenty and [a new rays touch tank](#) – the

award-winning [Newman Branch Creek Habitat Restoration Project](#) is helping to return the surrounding habitat to its natural form with new native plants and a restored estuary. Across from FCTC, on the other side of Dickman Road, Tampa Electric is building [the area's largest solar array](#), rated at 23 megawatts, on land the company owns.

And when construction on FCTC wraps up, West Central Florida will have a new showcase for stewardship, research, habitat restoration, help for endangered species, education – and yes, fun – from three champions of the environment.

“TECO is proud to stand side-by-side with FWC and the Florida Aquarium to provide this incredible resource that's free to the public to visit,” said **Stan Kroh**, manager of Land and Stewardship Programs with Tampa Electric's Environmental, Health & Safety team. “An effort of this scale needs partners of this size and commitment – it's a core value we all

share to make sure future generations can enjoy the incredible Florida ecosystem that we can experience up close today at places like FCTC. Come to the open house on Jan. 30 and see for yourself!”



Beneath the SYCC, kayaks wait for eager paddlers with a manatee sculpture.

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19