

2025 EARTH DAY EVENT

Name of the Event:

FUTURE-PROOFING EVENTS

Turning Trash Into Treasure—One Banana Peel at a Time!

From Composting to Food Circularity: the glow-up your leftovers deserve

Details about the Event:

This Earth Day event was designed to showcase sustainable event practices in action, highlight our chapter's commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and inspire attendees to adopt eco-conscious habits in both their professional and personal lives. The program included an educational panel, a plant-based meal, sustainable hands-on activations, and networking opportunities.

[SITE Florida & Caribbean 2025 Sustainability Roadmap](#)



EARTH DAY EVENT – SDG IMPACT SUMMARY

This event was intentionally designed to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), showcasing how sustainable practices, wellness, and industry collaboration can drive meaningful change. The program highlighted the following 8 SDGs:

SDG 2: Zero Hunger

By spotlighting food rescue initiatives and circular food systems, the event emphasized actionable strategies to reduce food waste and redirect surplus food to those in need. Through education and speaker insights on composting and sustainable food practices, participants gained a deeper understanding of how food equity and environmental justice intersect. These conversations empowered attendees to advocate for systemic changes that contribute to both hunger reduction and ecological stewardship—promoting a more inclusive and sustainable food future.

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being

The plant-based, climate-conscious menu and zero-waste catering model supported better nutrition and environmental health. Additionally, the mindful grounding and gratitude ritual for Mother Earth encouraged mental and emotional well-being. This somatic moment and hands-on activations (*such as the planting station using finished compost from the South Beach Food and*

Wine and Ultra Music Festivals which took place in Miami earlier this year; making your own BBQ rub from used coffee grounds; and craft your own mocktail bar using byproducts from the wasted created at the hospitality school's beverage classes and syrups made from the herbs grown on the onsite garden) offered participants a pause to reconnect with nature, reduce stress, and build awareness of the link between planetary health and personal wellness.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

Although not explicitly framed as a gender-focused event, the Earth Day program uplifted the voices and leadership of women in sustainability and the next generation of female leaders. With women like Marianne Schmidhofer (Moderator) and SITE Florida & Caribbean board members playing central roles in planning, curating and leading the event, the program highlighted female leadership in the traditionally male-dominated fields of environmental policy, hospitality management, and waste systems. The SITE Florida & Caribbean board members involved in the planning of the event are all women entrepreneurs. In addition, the event supported and highlighted a small woman-owned minority business (Magspread), owned by an FIU Hospitality School graduate, who provided the vegan small bites.

SDG 7 – Clean Energy: Conversations around renewable energy in events.

SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption: Zero-waste execution and measurable waste diversion.

SDG 13 – Climate Action: Reduced food waste, reduced emissions, composting.

SDG 14 – Life Below Water: Eliminating single-use plastics to prevent marine pollution.

SDG 17 – Partnerships: Cross-sector collaboration between SITE, FIU, young leaders, and sustainability organizations.

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

While not the central focus of the event, discussions on sustainable operations and the role of clean energy in event production are embedded in our broader education agenda. Encouraging event planners and hospitality professionals to consider clean energy sources—such as solar-powered venues or low-emission transportation—reinforced the importance of integrating renewable energy solutions into the meetings and events industry.

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

This Earth Day event modeled sustainable event planning through a zero-waste approach, including composting efforts, reuse of materials, and eco-conscious catering choices. The educational session highlighted practical ways to reduce resource consumption, encouraging event professionals to shift from linear to circular practices. By focusing on measurable waste diversion strategies and vendor accountability, the event served as a living example of responsible production in action.

SDG 13: Climate Action

Reducing food waste, minimizing single-use materials, and encouraging sustainable transport (e.g., carpooling, reusable bottles) for this event drove awareness of how events contribute to climate change—and how they can mitigate it. The hands-on composting education and climate-friendly menu helped attendees visualize the direct link between everyday choices and their environmental impact, inspiring collective action directly contributing to reducing the event's carbon footprint. Additionally, planting the seeds in FIU's new Living Laboratory Garden offered a tangible climate solution by promoting local food systems, enhancing soil health, and sequestering carbon—directly supporting Climate Action through regenerative, community-based practices. And it will be fun to follow the lifecycle of our seeds into the future..

SDG 14: Life Below Water

The event's zero-waste approach helped prevent potential marine pollution by limiting landfill contributions and plastic waste. Promoting reusable, compostable materials and sustainable food systems supported healthier ecosystems and raised awareness of how land-based practices affect ocean and waterway health.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

This event was the result of collaboration among SITE Florida & Caribbean, FIU's Chaplin School of Hospitality, young industry leaders, and sustainability-focused organizations like Renuable. These partnerships demonstrate the power of cross-sector collaboration to advance sustainability in meaningful and innovative ways. By uniting education, hospitality, and nonprofit sectors, the event models how goal-aligned partnerships can amplify impact and mobilize real change across the global events ecosystem.



BEST PRACTICES FOR HOSTING AN EARTH DAY EVENT

- **Prioritize Clear Communication:**
Effective communication is the backbone of a successful sustainable event. We take a 360° approach, ensuring alignment across all stakeholders:

- **With Venue & Catering Partners:**
We clearly define our sustainability goals in the RFP and share a detailed Sustainability Checklist. Through consistent Zoom calls, event documentation, and site specs, we maintain open dialogue and ensure our partners' values and capabilities align with ours.
- **With Speakers & Panelists:**
We prepare content collaboratively with our presenters, investing time in Zoom briefings and one-on-one conversations to align on messaging, tone, and expectations. This ensures that their insights reinforce our sustainability goals.
- **With Attendees:**
Our "Know Before You Go" communications provide essential event details—reminders to bring reusable water bottles, carpool, wear eco-conscious attire, and expect plant-based meals. Clearly stating our "WHY" fosters understanding and participation.
- **With Our Internal Team:**
We foster a collaborative planning environment, encouraging idea-sharing and thoughtful delegation. A detailed Run of Show (ROS) ensures smooth on-site execution and accountability.
- **Through Post-Event Surveys:**
We actively listen and adapt based on attendee feedback.

Communication takes effort—but it's vital. Without it, sustainability goals can easily be misinterpreted or overlooked. By being intentional and transparent at every stage, we align everyone toward a shared vision for impact.




- **Zero Waste Goals:**
Aim for zero waste by avoiding single-use plastics. Request only reusable items such as cups, cutlery, plates, décor, and name tags.
- **Sustainable Catering:**
Serve plant-based meals with locally sourced, seasonal ingredients. Order the appropriate quantities to minimize leftovers and food waste. Share stats with attendees on the environmental impact (e.g., carbon emission savings from plant-based meals).
- **Educational Components:**
Include hands-on learning and expert speakers. Collaborate with suppliers who can contribute meaningfully, whether through knowledge-sharing during the event or resources included in post-event communications.
- **Transportation Matters:**
Encourage attendees to use public transportation or carpool. Car-sharing not only reduces emissions but also fosters community and networking.
- **Decentralized Gatherings:**
If your chapter spans a wide region, consider hosting parallel events in multiple areas to minimize long-distance travel and provide inclusivity to your wider membership.

- **Engage Young Leaders and Students:**
They bring fresh energy, creative ideas, and are essential to the future of sustainable practices.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- **Communication is key:**
For example, after receiving constructive feedback on our International Women’s Day menu, we worked with our caterer to develop more widely appealing plant-based dishes and we learned to clearly explain the rationale behind our menu decisions in advance for Earth Day. Transparency helps manage expectations and enhances the overall experience.
- **Quantify Your Impact:**
Share data with attendees—how many plastic bottles were diverted, emissions saved by serving plant-based meals, etc. It reinforces the value of their participation. We did this by incorporating stats on the registration page, KBYG, an educational reel playing throughout the event, and post event report, highlighting the impact of our conscious choices and actions.
- **Post-Event Engagement:**
In follow-up emails, ask attendees what stood out to them, what could be improved, and what topics they’d like to explore next. Include direct links to sustainable partners featured at the event.
- **Align with Selected SDGs:**
Choose a few relevant Sustainable Development Goals to focus on. Explain your chapter’s SDG priorities and how they’re reflected in the event design. Attempting to cover all 17 at once can dilute impact—focus fosters clarity and purpose. See below for our SDG impact report from Earth Day.







ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- Showcase your chapter’s SDG commitments visually and verbally during the event.
 [View Event Details and Stats Shared](#)
-  [View the SDG Impact Report](#)
- Capture and share moments from the event to extend the message and inspire others.
 [View Event Photos](#)
- Social media played a key role in expanding the reach of the Earth Day event by amplifying its message, engaging a broader audience, and driving awareness around sustainable practices, student involvement, and the event’s alignment with the UN SDGs.

LinkedIn Posts:

-  [Event Promotion](#)
-  [Post-event](#)

EARTH DAY EVENT AGENDA

-  Welcome mocktails + refreshments + action stations
-  Expert-led education session on zero waste and food circularity
-  Grounding gratitude ritual for mother earth
-  Networking over a delicious plant-based lunch
-  Composting activity (yes, we're planting egg cartons!)
-  Guided tour of FIU's brand-new composting garden

11:15 AM – 12:00 PM - Registration

Networking

Welcome Refreshments

Interactive Mocktail Station and plant-based small bites

Make your own BBQ Rub Station (using repurposed used coffee grounds)

12:00 – 12:10 PM - Welcome by SITE Florida & Caribbean Chapter

Steffi Kordy, President-Elect

Megan Leslie, VP of Young Leaders

Maura Zhang, VP of Sustainability and Wellness

12:10 – 1:00 PM - Education Session

Moderator: Marianne Schmidhofer, GMCVB/Sustainable Events Network

Speakers: Dr. John Buschman, FIU Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, and Xavier DeRoos, Renuable

- *Sustainable Event Practices – From Zero Waste to Circular Food Systems*
- *Key insights on reducing food waste, food rescue, composting, circular food systems, and integrating renewable energy into event planning*

1:00 – 2:00 PM - Networking & Lunch

Plant-Based Meal

Mother Earth Grounding and Gratitude Ritual

Interactive Mocktail Station reopens

Planting the Seed Station opens (using finished compost from this year's South Beach Food & Wine and Ultra Music Festivals in Miami)

2:00 – 2:30 PM - Closing Remarks & Call to Action

Mindful Raffle supporting 2 complimentary SITE Young Leader memberships

Optional tour of the Living Laboratory across campus, under development with a new organic garden and composting site with Dr. Jesse Blanchard of FIU's Department of Earth & Environment.

Planting our seeds in the Garden's first planting bed