

## Group Trying To Get Turtles, Kids Together

June 30, 1989|By Patricia Caporale of The Sentinel Staff

3-4 minutes

---

MELBOURNE — Have you hugged your turtle today?

Members of the Sea Turtle Preservation Society in Melbourne Beach want to make sure disabled children soon will at least be able to see some of the endangered turtles that nest on Brevard's coast.

That's why the group has planned this weekend's second annual Sea Turtle Celebration, to be held from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at Wickham Park.

Proceeds from the two-day event will go to "Turtles for Tots," a program to help injured and disabled children see and experience the wonder of the sea turtles. The money will be used to buy a specially equipped All-Terrain Vehicle that can be used to transport such children onto the beach at night to view the nesting sea turtles.

The idea for "Turtles for Tots" came from an adult burn victim who, after participating in one of the society's turtle walks, suggested that the adventures would be a perfect activity for severely burned children who could not be exposed to sunlight. The response to the program was so good that society members decided to open it to all disabled children.

The custom-made ATV will be equipped so that it won't flip over and will be able to accommodate wheelchair-bound children. The vehicle will then allow them access to the isolated sites on the beach where the turtles nest and lay their eggs.

Although the project has received numerous requests for participation by area hospitals, it can't happen without the special vehicle and permission for its use on the beach. The purpose behind this weekend's two-day celebration at Wickham Park is to raise funds for the ATV and support for the project.

Visitors can come out to Wickham Park both days and enjoy the celebration or spend the weekend at the park's camping facilities. There will be swimming, softball, volleyball, an arts and crafts show, performances by De Mars the Magician, clowns, kids games and a selection of food and beverages.

There will be no admission to the "Turtles for Tots" fund-raiser, but tickets will be sold for contests, the petting zoo, clown-face painting, pie-eating contest, games, souvenirs, food and drinks.

Dinner specials include a variety of foods from hot dogs and hamburgers to a \$5 seafood plate with grouper, scallops, clams, hush puppies and corn on the cob, or a \$4 barbecue sandwich platter with french fries and corn on the cob.

In addition, there will be prizes auctioned during several sets throughout the event. The auction features more than 150 gifts, gift certificates and sports items, featuring items such as haircuts, auto care products and jet-ski rentals.

Continuous live entertainment will be provided both days by The Puzzlers, Too Hot To Tango, Child's Play, the Screaming Iguanas of Love, Instant Daddy-o's featuring Dave Fiester, the Stockyard Band, Circus-Circus, Nightfall, Chris McCune, Franke Lutz, Agent 86, Mammoth Band, Straight-Up Blues Band, Dead Serious, Jill Tower and the Heat, Vital Signz, Djorn Hansen and Shaker.

"Turtles for Tots is our most progressive and important program ever," said Peter Bandre, society president. "We can make it a reality."