IUSB students enjoy their first PARK(ing) Day

MELISSA FLANAGAN

South Bend Tribune

5:12 PM EDT, September 20, 2012

SOUTH BEND — Students at Indiana University South Bend jumped on a growing global movement Thursday and held the university’s first PARK(ing) Day.

PARK(ing) Day is an international event that raises awareness for the need for more open space in urban areas by transforming a parking spot into a public park. Today (FRIDAY) is the officially recognized PARK(ing) Day.

Co-sponsored by IUSB’s Center for a Sustainable Future and the Sustainability and Wellness Club, the event was held in the campus parking lot between Greenlawn Hall and the Student Activities Center. The converted park offered popcorn, music and outdoor games such as Frisbee and four-square, all free of charge.

“Instead of (the spot) being used for one person’s car, it’s used for everyone to have fun,” Hailey Hennessy, IUSB junior and PARK(ing) Day organizer, said.

After reading about the event on another college’s website, Hennessy said she learned it was an international movement and planned to bring it to IUSB in order to raise awareness of sustainability issues.

“Its goal is to make people aware of how we’re using our land because we only have so much of it,” she said. “Once you pave it, it’s not turning back to what it used to be.”

The day also encourages students to take advantage of alternative methods of transportation, rather than solely using their cars, Hennesssey said.

“If you use more efficient transportation, there will be less parking space and more park space,” she said.

The PARK(ing) Day project was conceived in San Francisco in 2005 when ReBar, an art and design studio, rented a downtown metered parking space and transformed it into a public park for the allotted two hours. Since then, the event has grown independently of ReBar and has evolved to address various social issues.

PARK(ing) Day 2011 included 975 parks in 35 countries, according to the movement’s website.

IUSB’s miniature park and its entertainment options, taking two parking spaces in the lot, had attracted more than 50 visitors by 1 p.m. Thursday. Rebecca Wilson, a junior, said she had never heard of PARK(ing) Day before Thursday.

“I was waiting for my aunt because she was coming so I decided to go play (ladderball),” she said.

Once she learned the background of the event, Wilson said she supported the values behind it.
“I think it’s a good idea,” she said. “For example, I know lately they’re cutting down a lot of trees and you need the trees.”

Hennessey, who is a member of the Sustainability and Wellness Club and an intern at the Center for a Sustainable Future, said most of the event’s attendees, like Wilson, were unaware of the existence of PARK(ing) Day.

“Nobody who came had any clue, they all said, ‘What the heck is PARK(ing) Day?’” Hennessey said. “So I would explain it to them ... and they would say ‘Oh, wow, that’s pretty cool.’”

Michael Apostolou, a super senior at IUSB and member of the Sustainability and Wellness Club, said he likes the idea of PARK(ing) Day for the same reason he joined the club this year: Because he cares about the environment.

Apostolou hopes the event demonstrates the importance of alternative means of transportation at IUSB.

“Pavement is valuable space that could be used more wisely,” he said. “(The event) hopefully inspires people to care for the environment and think about their impact on it.”

Staff writer Melissa Flanagan:
mflanagan@sbtinfo.com

Copyright © 2012, South Bend Tribune