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*Liz Fox:* Hi, this is Positively Ocean where we celebrate the ocean and look at what's working well. I'm Liz Fox. In late May, a modern day scene from Huckleberry Finn played out on a small river in Illinois, all in the name of ocean conservation. Baylee Ritter was following behind when three high school students from her hometown of Pontiac and the school superintendent floated two and a half miles on a raft they built solely from riverbank debris that they had collected in the days before. The ragtag team wove plastic grocery bags to form a sail, bound barrels cast aside from farms for floatation, and improvised braided rope with plastic that they shredded from water bottles. And even though the local fire department deployed a rescue boat, they never needed a tow.

*Baylee Ritter:* People from the shore were calling, "Hey, do you need help? Is everything alright?" The kids would yell back, "Yeah, we're floating for a purpose!" It was a huge yelling back and forth of, "Okay, what actually is this World Oceans Day?"

*Liz Fox:* Ritter, a 20 year old DePaul University student, embarked on the project to creatively fulfill her responsibility as a member of the Ocean Projects Youth Advisory Council. Besides advocating for ocean conservation in Washington DC this year, the Ocean Project asked its youth leaders to host their own World Oceans Day events. Ritter held her event before the global June 8 celebration to reach kids before school got out and show them how trash in their landlocked state floats downstream to the ocean.

*Baylee Ritter:* This boat was more than a boat. It was something that exists purely to get people talking. I think that if we can show everybody that they too have a voice in the game and that their voice can be heard, I think people will start to care.

*Liz Fox:* And that's the point, said Samantha Mackiewicz, the director of World Oceans Day at the Rhode Island based advocacy organization. She maintains the website [worldoceansday.org](http://worldoceansday.org), which allows people and groups to post and find events anywhere. Mackiewicz expects more than 1000 events this year. And the ocean projects connection to a very special network of zoos and aquaria help keep everyone in the loop. Here's Mackiewicz.

*Samantha Mackiewicz:* We have tons and tons of zoos and aquariums celebrating World Oceans Day all over the country, especially in inland communities

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where they're not as connected to the sea. The zoo and aquarium can help establish that connection for them.

*Liz Fox:* The growing network can take credit for the day itself. The Ocean Project worked for several years to connect with and coordinate through museums, aquaria, and private sector networks to successfully petition the United Nations in 2008 to designate June 8 as World Oceans Day. The benefits of working with zoo and aquaria were twofold. First, the institutions already reached a broad audience across the country and world. And second, the audience they reach is young, open to new ideas, and eager to participate in determining their future. After kids' initial introduction to environmental science and conservations at zoos and aquaria, the Ocean Project picks up the reins to train youth, like Ritter, to work on solutions from multiple angles. That's why she'll spend the first weekend in June in Vancouver speaking to corporate executives about sustainability and her vision for the future. Then, she'll head to Washington DC for World Oceans Week.

*Baylee Ritter:* You know if you're at a restaurant, why do you have the people leaving the table order for you? Right? It doesn't quite make sense. I want to honestly change that dialogue and have them sit back down at the table. I want us to eat together and figure out a way where our future can be protected now.

*Liz Fox:* Back here in California, the Oakland Zoo will screen *Moana* on World Oceans Day and continue to educate patrons as to why there are no plastic straws, condiment packets, or drink lids in their cafe. Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary and Point Reyes National Seashore will provide a special day of programming at Bear Valley Visitor Center and the Point Reyes National Lighthouse Visitor Center. So if you're a kid, or if you have one and you're listening, head on over and remember this message from Mackiewicz.

*Samantha Mackiewicz:* And youth are the next wave of change, and they're the ones who should be leading the charge of World Oceans Day.

*Liz Fox:* And that's an example of folks doing right by the ocean. Until next time, I'll be searching for all things Positively Ocean. For Ocean Currents and KWMR radio, this is Liz Fox reporting from Berkeley, California.  
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