



Green Earth
2015

Earth Day 45

Every year, Earth Day brings together kindred spirits to celebrate all there is to love about the environment. This year's edition — the 45th — is focused on combining that reverence with swift action.

Earth Day 45: It's Our Turn to Lead is the theme of the 2015 iteration. Coordinators are hoping it becomes the most exciting year in environmental history. At the forefront of the focus is the potential for a binding climate change treaty that activists are pushing to be passed and signed into law.

WHEN AND WHAT IS EARTH DAY?

Earth Day is celebrated around the world on April 22, although many events are routinely organized the week-ends before or after. Some communities even observe Earth Week or Earth Month, coordinating a lengthy series of environment-focused events throughout April.

Earth Day at its core is a way for environmental activists, political leaders and the public to join forces to build the base of support for meaningful programs.

It is the largest civic event in the world, celebrated simultaneously around the globe; more than a billion people participate in the Earth Day Network's offering of events.

GETTING INVOLVED

If you're looking for a way



to get involved in environmental stewardship, attending an Earth Day event is a great way to start.

You can choose to participate as a visitor or even offer your services for a day of

volunteering.

There are also numerous ways to become kinder to your surroundings by making thoughtful changes to your daily routine. Installing solar panels on your roof,

altering a few habits or committing to educating youth on Earth-friendly actions are all great ways to make a positive impact on the environment.

If you're planning to host

your own Earth Day event, be sure to register it at www.earthday.org/2015. Doing so will increase visibility for your activities and help alert those searching for a way to get involved.

Plenty to Do

Especially if you live near a major city, there are many ways to celebrate Earth Day.

Perform an online search for “Earth Day” and the name of your closest city and you will be directed to community organizations that are busy putting the finishing touches on their celebrations.

Get involved by volunteering or just check out the organization’s calendar of events to map out your Earth Day plans.

Here are a few of the nation’s most prominent Earth Day celebrations:

DALLAS

Earth Day Texas (formerly tabbed Earth Day Dallas) is an annual, outdoor, free festival that encourages leaders in the corporate, academic and non-profit worlds to unite and promote green lifestyle choices.

The event is generally held in the heart of Dallas, sprawling across 500,000 square feet of both indoor and outdoor event space. More than 600 exhibitors and 60,000 guests are expected to attend this year’s event.

CHICAGO

Chicago’s 25th Annual Earth Day Parks & Preserves Clean-Up was a huge hit last year, inspiring community members to clean and green their



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local neighborhood areas.

Supported by a large list of volunteers and sponsors, the event has grown in popularity.

Find a participating park or preserve near you by visiting <http://www.earthdaychicago.com/volunteer.html>.

PORTLAND

One of the largest in the nation, the Portland Earth Day celebration

brings together more than 4,000 people to a different community in the city every year. It is a community-organized event that in 2014 featured more than 75 sustainable businesses and organizations.

The event is regarded for its focus on youth education and its popular Soapbox Speakers’ Stage, which hosts industry-leading presenters as they speak about environmental issues.

NEW YORK

Earth Day New York is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2015, with dozens of exhibits, family-friendly activities and live events in bustling Union Square.

Earth enthusiasts also can get in on the organization’s first Earth Day New York 5K walk and seed planning event. Funds raised through the event will be earmarked for bolstering the group’s environmental programs.

Sustainable Travel

So you've chosen a 2015 Earth Day event to attend. What about the other 364 days of the year? There are likely other aspects of your life that could use some fine-tuning to help lessen your impact on the environment.

Let's take travel for instance. How many miles are you driving per day? 50? 100? 200?

The pollutants released by vehicles can greatly increase air pollution levels and greenhouse gas emissions that have been linked to a variety of health effects, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports, including premature mortality, cardiac symptoms and diminished lung function.

GO GREEN

In order to curb the damaging impact of our current transportation choices, activists urge you to adopt a more sustainable method of travel. Doing so can help generate income and employment for travel destinations while protecting local ecosystems.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Incorporate some small steps, such as combining trips or using public transit, to make a difference. The CDC recommends the following

steps you can take to improve the health of our environment, as well as encourage your friends and family members to take, as well. Try to incorporate a few of these recommendations into your daily life. You'll be a traveling sustainably in no time.

COMMUTE ALTERNATIVES

- Walking and bicycling
- Public transportation
- Carpools
- Van pools
- Telework and alternate work schedules

GREEN TRAVEL TIPS

- Use public transportation in your destination city.
- Purchase electronic tickets.
- Inquire about hotel van service and forgo renting a car.
- Use Internet map services instead of printing maps.
- Participate in hotel linen reuse programs.
- Settle your accounts via the hotel's electronic check-out program.



Green Schools

We all know that environmental activism knows no geographical boundaries. There are major issues to be dealt with across the world. Likewise, activism also can be practiced by people of all ages.

Thanks to local leaders, national legislators and the Earth Day Network, a green schools movement has swept over the United States educational landscape in recent years.

First championed for during the 2005-2006 school year, the network's green schools programing has since recruited an extensive list of schools combining traditional education approaches with energy-focused innovations in building science and economy support.

Students within schools that were built to be more environmentally friendly are made more aware of the impact their actions can have on the Earth.

A TRUE PARTNERSHIP

Schools participating in green programming are focused on enhancing student learning and health while also increasing the quality of their communities.

Annually, the Earth Day Network's green school programs directly reach more than 30,000 educators and provide expert guidance throughout notable publications.



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GREENER SCHOOL BUILDINGS

“Greening” a school doesn’t have to solely mean adopting environmentally-focused curriculum. A recent study by the U.S. Green Building Council found that 55 million students

spend their days in schools that are too often unhealthy and that restrict their ability to learn.

While many green schools are popping up throughout the country, these high-performance buildings are generally most costly to erect. The

council’s national review of 30 green schools demonstrated that green schools cost less than 2 percent more than conventional schools (about \$3 per square foot) but provide financial benefits that are 20 times as large.

Green schools also can pro-

vide a range of additional benefits, including reductions in teacher sick days, social inequalities, maintenance costs and uninsured risks, while boosting things such as state competitiveness and educational enrichment, the council’s report states.

The Canopy Project

Through various programs and initiatives, the Earth Day Network has impacted the environment in many ways. Its most far-reaching effort may be The Canopy Project.

The project is aimed at protecting natural lands and preserving the environment by focusing on large-scale forestry. In 2012, the network committed to plant 10 million trees over the next five years in impoverished areas of the world.

THE NEED FOR TREES

With the reality of increasingly unpredictable weather patterns and more frequent and violent storms and floods, the tree cover needed to prevent devastating soil erosion has never been more important, according to the Earth Day Network.

Trees also have a positive effect on the earth by filtering the air and helping to stave off the impact of climate change. Workers within The Canopy Project plant trees that help some of the world's most impoverished communities reverse the impact of land degradation and provide food, energy and income opportunities.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the past three years,

The Canopy Project, has planted over 1.5 million trees in 18 countries. In the United States, projects to restore urban canopies have been completed in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Atlanta, Baltimore, Cleveland and Chicago.

On a global basis, the Earth Day Network stepped up its efforts in Haiti, where earthquakes caused landslides on deforested hillsides. The network planted 500,000 trees to curb some of the devastation.

Additionally, in three high-poverty districts in central Uganda, the network planted 350,000 trees through The Canopy Project. The trees helped deliver food, fuel, fencing, and soil stability to local farmers, and also provided fuel wood, animal fodder, construction materials and intercropping. In one district, families planted trees for timber and to create living fences to protect their land from being seized by corrupt farmers.

Efforts like these are in the works across the world as The Canopy Project looks to leave a plant-filled footprint on the environment.



Choose Your Leaders Wisely

While you should never underestimate your ability to impart change on a particular issue, it doesn't hurt to have an elected leader in your corner.

Governors, senators, representatives and mayors all have responsibilities to serve on behalf of those who have elected them into positions of prominence.

They are at the forefront of addressing the impacts of climate change and other environmental challenges facing their communities while at the same time struggling to balance the daily requirements of their posts. So a simple reminder by you regarding important environmental issues may be welcome by your busy official.

KNOW THE ISSUES

Many issues fall under the Earth Day umbrella. From water conservation and habitat destruction to pesticide use and overfishing, it is important to know why and how these practices can affect your daily life.

Policy is being passed on these issues and more, including transportation, green education, energy, recycling and waste reduction, advocacy and biodiversity.

You can start by researching the most important issues facing your local community and expanding out from there. Soon you will have an expanse of knowledge on various topics that



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can help guide your opinions on action that needs to be taken.

RESEARCH CANDIDATES

You can learn a lot about candidates by researching how they have voted on past environmental issues. By remaining current on these

matters, you will be able to find out where a political leader's opinions fall.

Support your own research by attending public town hall events or subscribing to your local newspaper. Such mediums allow for current, in-depth information that can help make you a more informed voter and environmental activist.

INTERACT WITH OFFICIALS

Many elected officials and local leaders from across the globe participate in Earth Day events, especially if they are advocates for conservation or preservation. Find out where your local event will be taking place and research its itinerary on the web. There you can

find out if any of your local officials will be making speeches or setting up informational booths.

Interacting personally with your local leaders can do more good than you may realize. If you have an issue that you are passionate about, you may be able to influence future policy by letting your local leaders know your thoughts.

Plastics Recycling

Shampoo and conditioner bottles are essential to our everyday grooming routines. But what about after the bottle runs dry?

If you ask an environmental activist, he will likely mention pollution, waste and environmental degradation.

Plastics play an important role in almost every aspect of our lives, from beverage containers to furniture. The largest amount of plastics is found in containers and packaging such as shampoo and conditioner bottles. Nondurable goods such as diapers, trash bags and utensils also contain plastic.

Measuring the recycling rate of the different types of plastics can be difficult, but the overall rate is only about 9 percent, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA also reports that plastics make up almost 13 percent of the municipal solid waste stream, a dramatic increase from less than 1 percent in the 1960s.

ABOUT RECYCLING

According to the American Chemistry Council, about 1,800 United States businesses handle or reclaim post-consumer plastics.

Plastics set out for recycling first go a material recovery facility, where they are sorted by type and baled for delivery to a reclaiming facility. Once there, they are sorted again for any trash or

dirt before being washed and ground into small flakes.

Flakes are then dried, melted, filtered and formed into pellets that are shipped to product manufacturing plants where they are made into new plastic products.

This relatively simple pro-

cess is waiting to re-purpose your old plastics, but obviously it can't happen without your help.

BY THE NUMBERS

Here are some facts about plastics, according to the Environmental Protection

Agency.

- 32 million tons of plastic waste was generated in 2012, representing 12.7 percent of total municipal solid waste

- In 2012, the United States generated almost 14 million tons of plastics as containers and packaging,

about 11 million tons as durable goods such as appliances, and almost 7 million tons as nondurable goods, such as plates and cups

- In 2012, the category of plastics which includes bags, sacks and wraps was recycled at about 12 percent.

