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Keeping the House Clean

THE QUEST TO SUPPORT AND GROW EARTH DAY CONTINUES

APRIL 22, 2020 MARKS the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Over the course of this past half-century, Earth Day has evolved from an American environmental day to an international opportunity for engagement in global problem solving. At the heart of this movement is each one of us, who are empowered to make a difference right where we are.

Earth Day Is Launched

In 1969, Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson proposed a college-based “Environmental Teach-In” and recruited Denis Hayes as national coordinator. Under Hayes’ leadership, the teach-in concept evolved over time to include a nationwide series of marches and rallies, and the event was rechristened “Earth Day.” An activist and graduate student at the time, Hayes dropped out of Harvard and enlisted nearly 100 staff and interns to promote events from coast to coast.

April 22, 1970 was selected because it fell between spring break and final exams and would better accommodate student participation. As a result, 20 million people gathered for teach-ins and events to highlight ecological concerns throughout the country—from the oil spill in Santa Barbara to air pollution in Denver and the impact of DDT in the Northeast. The same year, the National Environmental Policy Act became a law requiring federal agencies to evaluate and report the environmental impacts of their activities.

Here in Barrington

Locally, some Barrington residents began discussing issues surrounding suburban growth, as sprawl began to threaten native habitats and the rare species of plants and animals dependent upon them. In 1971, Citizens for Conservation (CFC) was incorporated as a Barrington not-for-profit conservation organization with the mission

of “saving living space for living things through protection, restoration and stewardship of land, conservation of natural resources and education.”

Today, CFC has saved more than 3,500 acres and works to maintain over 476 acres across the greater Barrington area. The all-volunteer organization is also instrumental in the Barrington Greenway Initiative which expands the legacy of conservation work into the next generation. It will help deliver even greater benefits to the community.

Nationwide Progress

Within two years of the first Earth Day, the Clean Water Act was enacted to address water quality by addressing both non-point source pollution and discharge. At the same time, the EPA issued a “cancellation order for DDT based on its adverse environmental effects, such as those to wildlife, as well as its potential human health risks.” A year

later, the Endangered Species Act empowered the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service to implement “a program for the conservation of threatened and endangered plants and animals and the habitats in which they are found.” By 1975, cars and trucks were required to use lead-free fuel to pass emissions tests in compliance with the Clean Air Act. “For about five years, we were virtually unstoppable,” says Hayes reflecting on the early days of the movement.


In the next decade, the government’s attention turned to remediating hazardous waste sites through the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (Superfund program) and safely disposing of nuclear waste with the Nuclear Waste Policy Act.

International Reach

By 1990, the emphasis changed from lifestyle changes to climate change as 200 million people in 144 countries participated in what Hayes describes as “the first global non-religious holiday”. The United Nations selected Earth Day 2016 to sign the historic Paris Agreement “to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change.” This year, Earth Day is expected to be observed by 1 billion people in over 190 countries including parts of Central Africa and Uzbekistan. The theme for Earth Day 2020 is climate action, and events will span April 22-24, 2020.

Threats to the ozone, migratory species, oceans, and global climate change know no borders.

Without global enforcement mechanisms, Hayes points out the need to “capture public attention and demand changes in the way government behaves” in order to address the needs of a planet in need of healing. Fifty years after the first Earth Day, Hayes remains hopeful and dedicated to living the environmental values he extols to others.

Barrington High School Science Teacher and Earth Council Sponsor Caroline Milne concurs. “Every action you take, whether small or large, to reduce your waste helps bring our earth back to homeostasis. You are a part of this Earth, not apart from it,” she said. 

10 WAYS YOU CAN HELP THE EARTH

Commit to making one improvement.

- If everyone did one thing differently, it would make a huge difference because there are so



Susan Lenz, Barrington Area Conservation Trust, and BHS teacher Jeff McMahon teach a class at Flint Creek which runs along school property.

many people. -Erin Tantillo, Science Teacher, Barrington High School.

- With a little bit of thought, a little bit of research, everybody can reduce their carbon footprint by more than a third. -Denis Hayes, National Coordinator of the first Earth Day.

Reduce waste.

- A great way to be environmentally friendly is to consume less. -John Ardente, Horticulture Teacher, Barrington High School.
- Bring your own shopping bag, coffee tumbler, reusable water bottle, and container for leftovers; buy food with minimal packaging; and skip the straw.
- Individually, each person can help the environment tremendously by reducing food waste, consumption, meat in his/her diet, plastic waste, and emissions through clean energy usage. -Jennifer Lucas, Founder, Go Green Barrington.
- Compost your food scraps. -Jennifer Kainz, Co-founder, Mindful Waste.

Get outside.

- Learn about the environment and nature around you by participating in it. -Susan Lenz, Executive Director of Conservation, Barrington Area Conservation Trust.
- Explore and learn about your natural surroundings. It will change how you live your life. -Kathy Gabelman, Founder, Smart Farm of Barrington.

Be a good guest.

- Do you remember the first time you saw something magical at a preserve? Help us to create more memories for generations to come. Please leave nature in its place. -Jeff Rapp, Nature Center Director, Crabtree Nature Center.
- In areas where pets are allowed, keep them leashed to ensure a safe visit for you, your pet, other people, and wildlife.

Conserve and protect water.

- Turn off the faucet when brushing teeth. This saves about 3 gal/day.
- Don’t flush old medicine. Take it to the local police department for proper disposal.
- Take shorter showers. A 4-minute shower uses 20-40 gallons of water.
- Plan for full laundry cycles. A typical washing machine cycle can use up to 60 gallons of water.
- Invest in rain barrels to capture stormwater off the roof so you can use it elsewhere on your land without having to turn on the hose.
- Reduce your lawn; consider adding areas for native plants to add beauty to your yard, slow down and absorb more rainwater, provide shelter and nesting areas for birds, reduce flooding or demands on stormwater systems and reduce runoff into creeks and lakes.
- In areas that you would like to keep as lawn, do not mow your grass shorter than 3” so



CFC interns work nearby CFC headquarters.

promote better root growth, more resistance to periods of drought, and more weed resistance. -Faye Sinnott, Coordinator, Flint Creek/Spring Creek Watersheds Partnership

- Make sure your outside water is not coming from your water softener which is not good for your yard's plant materials.

Volunteer.

- Make a difference where you live. Volunteer with a conservation group where you can learn, build friends, and have fun while helping nature. -Patty Barten, Outreach Director, Citizens for Conservation.
- Sign petitions that promote changes you feel passionate about and share with others why change is important.

Welcome nature to your yard.

- Avoid using synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, whenever possible.
- Many people use buckthorn as a screen, but it is very damaging to our environment. Plan a phase-out of any buckthorn in your yard. -Faye Sinnott.
- Plant trees for mature canopies, not based on the size of the tree when it is planted. Jeremie Lukowicz, Director of Public Works, Village of Barrington.
- Stop volcano mulching trees. Spread mulch in a shallow bowl with the tree in the center, that way moisture should flow in the desired direction. -Mark Spreyer, Executive Director, Stillman Nature Center.

- Make new friends by restoring some habitat in your yard (or someone else's) with native plants and enjoy who shows up. -Gary Swick, President, Friends of the Fox River.

- Plant (or donate) a monarch butterfly garden. For more info, contact Barrington Area Conservation Trust.

Spend less time behind the wheel.

- Minimize your trips, by organizing and coordinating them.
- Shop locally. Support small businesses and farmers markets.
- Don't wait in line at the drive-thru. Go inside to prevent the car from idling.
- Grow a vegetable garden.

Save energy.

- Turn off the TV and lights when you leave or attach them to timers.
- Unplug appliances or use power strips for toasters, hairdryers, microwaves, phone chargers, computers, and lights to stop using electricity in standby mode.
- Switch to LEDs.
- Turn the temperature in your house down 2 degrees in winter and up 2 degrees in summer.
- Use a clothesline in the summer and drying racks in the winter. It takes just as much energy to dry, except the energy is from the sun.
- Insulate your house and replace windows with double or triple panes.
- Look for Energy Star labels and wash clothes with cold water whenever possible.

- Take a bike, bus, train, or walk to work.
- Consider installing solar panels and getting an all-electric vehicle. Denis Hayes charges his car with the solar panels from his house!

Recycle responsibly.

- Follow the directions of your waste provider when it comes to recycling batteries, compact fluorescent bulbs, and electronics.
- Do not include grades of plastic, paper, or glass not accepted by your provider.
- Return plastic grocery bags to Jewel or Wal-Mart.
- For Styrofoam packing materials, contact ABT (abt.com/help/green-initiatives). Chicago Logistics also recycles many electronic items and clean Styrofoam. Visit chicagologisticservice.com.
- To recycle textiles and shoes, contact PrairieLand Disposal (prairielanddisposal.com/recycling).

Engage with Others

Earth Day Planting Day at Pederson

Preserve. Be part of a team of volunteers from Barrington Area Conservation Trust, Citizens for Conservation, and Barrington High School installing native pollinator and streambank plants. **April 22, 2020 from 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.**

Earth Day at Carl R. Hansen Woods.

Participate in a stewardship activity and enjoy a hike at Poplar Creek Preserves. Advanced registration required. Call 708-386-4042. **April 22, 2020 from 4:30 –6 p.m.**

Earth Day Sedge Planting at Spring

Creek. Join volunteers from the Barrington Greenway Initiative planting sedges in a key wetland by Galloping Hill. **April 25, 2020 from 9:30 a.m.–noon.**



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

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