

(4/24/24 District Administrator's Corner Article)

This week students throughout the United States celebrate Earth Day in various ways.

The political birth of this celebration has some local interest. In 1969, a junior senator from Wisconsin, Gaylord Nelson, had long been concerned about the deteriorating environment in the United States. And in January 1969, he and citizens across our nation witnessed a massive oil spill in California. Inspired by other student movements, Senator Nelson wanted to harness the voices of students with an emerging public consciousness about air and water pollution.

The work started on college campuses. Senator Nelson announced the idea for a teach-in to the national media, and persuaded Pete McCloskey, a conservation-minded Congressman, to serve as his co-chair. There was immediate recognition of their success and soon activities and support across the country grew. They changed the name to Earth Day, which immediately sparked national media attention, and caught additional notoriety across the country. Earth Day inspired 20 million Americans—at the time, 10% of the total population of the United States—to take to the streets, parks and auditoriums to demonstrate against the impacts of 150 years of poorly guided industrial development which had left a growing legacy of serious human health impacts.

Earth Day in 1980, held in Washington, D.C. across from the White House, capped a decade of substantial US environmental legislation, including the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Toxics Substances Control Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and of course the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act. It also ignited the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and the banning of DDT and of lead in gasoline.

On WRCO, bright and early on Monday morning, an Earth Day ballad by the vocal ensemble Alabama, was played:

*We live in the land of plenty
But many things aren't plenty anymore
Like the water from our sink
They say it's not safe to drink
You gotta go and buy it at the store
Now we're told there's a hole in the ozone
Look what's washing on the beach
And Lord, I believe, from the heavens to the seas
We're bringing Mother Nature to her knees
So let's leave some blue up above us
Let's leave some green on the ground
It's only ours to borrow, let's save some for tomorrow
Leave it and pass it on down*

On the River Valley campus this week, two high school students, Claire Mertens and Lucy Spahn, have organized an Earth Day activity with the help of other National Honor Society students. The National Honor Society high school partners have spoken to elementary staff and partnered with Molter's Fresh Market. In an effort to build awareness, kids are decorating and promoting Earth Day on grocery bags. There will be messages and fun illustrations on bags as they are filled in the store. And, for every bag that gets prepared by a River Valley Elementary student, Molter's will be donating \$1 to the Arbor Day Foundation. We appreciate the efforts of our older students mentoring young minds to show them how great things can happen when we all work together.

Mr. Loren G. Glasbrenner
District Administrator