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Earth Steward Scholarship Award 2015

What is the significance of celebrating Earth Day on April 22nd? Not many people know that April 22nd of 1970 was the first earth day ever to be celebrated, and the birth of the environmental movement. The 70's was very well known for the "hippie" culture here in the U.S. 1970 was the year Jimi Hendrix died, the Beatles last album, and Simon & Garfunkel's "Bridge Over Troubled Water". People began various protests about peace, but saving the planet was not the motive, Americans were angry with what was going on in Vietnam, and students nationwide increasingly opposed the war. Giant gatherings were taking place in various large cities and often in our nation's capital, Washington DC. Protesters would travel in large groups, often using massive V8 sedans, which guzzled leaded gas. Industry belched out smoke and tar-like sludge with little fear of legal consequences or bad reputations through the press. Air pollution became known as "the smell of prosperity" or "smell of money" for many large company owners. "Environment" was just a science word children used in school and spelling bees, rather than on the evening news. This all came to a sudden interest to the American people when Rachel Carson's New York Times bestseller *Silent Spring* in 1962. The book was a representation of the watershed moment for the modern environmental movement, selling more than 400,000 copies in 24 countries, and Ms. Carson raised public awareness and concern for living organisms, public health, and the environment.

Many Americans became curious about this new topic, what could happen to the planet if they continued their seemingly harmless habits? Disposing trash into the ocean, releasing toxic fumes into our atmosphere, wasn't a common concern to anyone, and seemed harmless. Through

the talk that was becoming, people started to realize, that the damage coming into play was not okay.

The idea of having an earth day, came from its original founder, Gaylord Nelson. He was at the time serving as a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, after witnessing the massive oil spill in 1969, Santa Barbara, California. He became inspired by the students anti-war movement, and realized that if he could infuse that energy, to a positive environment awareness group, he could influence these radical students to push a force of environmental protection onto the national agenda. Senator Nelson announced the idea publicly as a "national teach-in on the environment" to the national media. He persuaded Pete McCloskey, a conservative-minded Republican Congressman, to become his right hand man, his co-chair. They then recruited Denis Hayes as a national coordinator, who then built a national staff of 85 to promote events across the nation. The result was astonishing, on the 22nd of April, 20 million Americans took to the streets, auditoriums, and parks to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment in this huge coast-to-coast rally. This caught the world's attention, and influenced many Americans to take part in this worthy cause, to save the planet we still manage to live on today.

The average American will participate in the earth day festivities, which usually consists of planting trees, flowers and other plants, and cleaning up your local community. What most people don't think about, is that one day of helping the environment is not close to enough. People need to realize that yes we have come a long way when it comes to recycling, and biodegradable goods, but we can always take a step further as well. Plastic bottles have become a huge threat to our planet. They're cheap, convenient, and harmful to our environment. Plastic does not break down like other products and plastic can easily be replaced. Glass water bottles

and metal bottles have started to become more and more popular. People are starting to realize what is good and what is bad for our home.

The talk of our water supplies has also become an epidemic. The worlds' water supplies has become impacted by the toxic chemicals being dumped into it. Americans have gotten better about how we dispose of our waist, but other countries need to get on board as well. Countries all around the world, don't even know how toxic simple waist is, and yet it is improperly disposed on a daily basis, if all the countries, or majority of them pitch in together to help keep our world a cleaner place, then a huge picture would come into play. People don't care about things they don't know about, which is why Americans need to publicize the importance of Earth Day, and the practice of keeping up a cleaner earth, every day.