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FEATURE 1



The late 1960s was a time of hippies, flower power, protest marches and rock 'n' roll. It was also the era when the seeds of an environmental movement in its infancy were being sown. In the early part of that decade, marine biologist Rachael Carson, founder of the contemporary environmental movement, published her landmark book, *Silent Spring*, a warning of the impact on our environment of modern pesticide use. Her book and lifelong work led to an American ban on the pesticide DDT, and launched environmental awareness at the grassroots level.

In 1969, with the wheels starting to roll in the public's conscience about the land, sea and air around them, U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson found himself standing on the California coast, looking out over the devastation wreaked by a massive oil spill. He knew that something had to be done immediately on an international level.

Writes Nelson, "Suddenly, the idea occurred to me, why not organize a huge grassroots protest over what was happening to our environment?" The senator was satisfied that if he could tap into the environmental concerns of the general public, he could generate a demonstration that would force environmental issues onto the political agenda.

Nelson announced that in the spring of 1970, there would be a nationwide demonstration on behalf of the environment. The media carried the story and the public responded with a passion, finally feeling that they had a forum to express concern about what was happening to the fragile land, sea and air.

The first Earth Day was born into this world on April 22, 1970 — an event that American Heritage Magazine called "one of the most remarkable happenings in the history of democracy. . . ." Now, almost four decades later, ecological sustainability is in the forefront again, and in Kingston, as in other communities worldwide, we still celebrate Earth Day by teaching and practising ways that we can live in harmony and balance with our natural world.

So, what's happening to educate the public about preservation and conservation? Officially, April 22 will mark the start of a global Green Generation Campaign (www.earthday.net). The core principles are to educate, plan and implement a carbon-free future based on renewable energy; to further commitments to responsible, sustainable consumption and to take steps towards a green economy fuelled by millions of quality green jobs.

Locally, events are being planned in communities and at schools throughout the region, including a Pitch-In Day for local students on April 24 at the MacLachlan Woodworking Museum and Grass Creek Park.

The plan is that the students will arrive from a local school and participate in an on-site educational program, with activities ranging from tree identification, discussions on recycling and waste management and, what's sure to be a crowd favourite, spreading wildflower seeds by pitching mud "seed balls."

But if you want to get ahead start and make this a family commitment, flick those switches and turn off your lights for Earth Hour on Saturday, March 28 between 8:30 and 9:30 p.m., a global event to mark humanity's impact on climate change. In Kingston's Springer Market Square, the hour will be filled with the music of an off-grid concert. Visit www.cityofkingston.ca/residents/environment/earth-hour.asp for more details.

And while you're enjoying the calm and peacefulness of the darkness surrounding you, take some time to contemplate just how simple it would be to make changes to your lifestyle throughout the other 364 days of the year.

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