

Fort Carson celebrates the 35th Anniversary of Earth Day

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DECAM

Twenty million people came out across the United States April 22, 1970 in a show of unity about their concern for the environment. It was the first Earth Day and it marked the beginning of an era of increased environmental awareness and prompted crucial environmental legislation, such as the Clean Air Act (1970), Clean Water Act (1972) and other laws to protect human health and the environment.

Although impressive environmental progress has been made since Sen. Gaylord Nelson founded Earth Day, much still needs to be done. More human energy and work is required to ensure a sustainable future for the next generations inheriting today's actions and inactions when it comes to natural resources. They will face the same challenges that are here now, including such issues as land use; water quality and conservation; energy conservation and air quality.

As just one example of the need for ongoing action, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency cites that Americans produced more than 229 million tons of trash in 2001. This equates to each person producing roughly 4.4 pounds of waste per person, per day and is an increase from 2.7 pounds of waste generated per person, per day in 1960. The ability to dispose of waste is a growing concern and as land resources grow scarcer, so does the ability to dispose of trash.

Earth Day today is just as relevant as it was in 1970 as a means to spur action through education. Fort Carson has been working with installation schools to teach children the value of caring for the environment through Earth Day activities since 1988. The goal was and is to instill students with a value for natural resources.

This year is the 35th Anniversary of Earth Day and Fort Carson has several events planned for local schools. The following school activities have been scheduled for April 20-21 since Fort Carson schools will be closed on Earth Day, April 22:

- A recycled grocery bag drawing contest (Grades 1-8) with the theme of "Earth Day - Every Day."
- An essay contest (Grades 3-8) with the theme of "How I plan to celebrate Earth Day every day."
- Volunteer readers will visit several schools April 19-20, to read and discuss the environmentally-themed book by Dr. Seuss, "The Lorax".
- The conclusion of the Earth Day 2005 celebrations will be Earth Day information fairs set up at several schools April 20. The school fairs will cover the following topics:
 - Leave no trace and outdoor survival.
 - Conserving and recycling.

- Encountering wildlife.
- The value of trees and tree planting.
- Experiencing cultural resources.

The following are several government websites available to aid parents and teachers in educating children about the environment and Earth Day: <http://www.earthday.gov/>, <http://www.epa.gov/kids/> and <http://aec.army.mil/usaec/publicaffairs/earthday04.html>.

To volunteer, especially in the area of reading “The Lorax” to students, or for more information about Earth Day events, call the Earth Day coordinator at 524-4925 or email janine.hegeman@carson.army.mil.