



April 22 is “Earth Day.” So, is it a day to celebrate the outdoors in the Lowcountry, to feel the splash of a saltwater mist and breathe in the fresh air? Or, is it a day to raise awareness of the planet’s “cancer” – the metastasized tumor, if you will, that is slowly degrading air and water quality, piling toxic waste, expending energy and destroying the ecosystems we cherish? Perhaps this Earth Day we’ll ask ourselves: *Am I sensitive or am I proactive?*

For critics of environmental conservation, I get how it seems counterintuitive to preserve nature when, by definition, it is always changing; but maybe the point is not so much about preserving nature as it is changing mankind’s behavior.

The founder of Earth Day, Senator Gaylor Nelson, said: “The objective was to organize a national demonstration of concern for the environment so large that it would shake up the political establishment and force this issue onto the national agenda.”

Yes, let’s be environmentally “sensitive” and take this one day to appreciate what is larger than us—all that exists independently of civilization. The ocean. The mountains. This perfectly balanced system that maintains and creates life. Tony Mills, local Master Naturalist, said that Earth Day allows him to reflect on how lucky he is—as we all are—to live in the Lowcountry, “a region of great beauty, extensive biodiversity and rich productivity.”

Yet the focus of Earth Day is as much about community as it is about the natural world. After all, it’s our responsibility to raise awareness of environmental issues and it’s our responsibility to actualize the change in our everyday actions. For if not us, then who?

Here are some local events and ideas for Earth Day:

Earth Day Celebration at Habersham

On Friday, April 20, from 4-7 p.m. Habersham Market Place is celebrating Earth Day by educating the community with realistic ways to live greener. It's also the Habersham Green Committee's second annual art show, "Up-Cycled Art in Downtown Habersham," featuring youth and adult artists. The winner will be announced at the festival. Taste locally-grown deliciousness from area farmers while listening to live music by Billy Drysdale; or check out the products and services of the various "green" groups that will be showcased. Be sure to bring along the kiddies; there will educational children's activities throughout the day.

Earth Day Celebration "Get in the Loop"

Green Experience is a Hilton Head nonprofit with a mission to "build sustainable communities that benefit the planet, its people and prosperity." April 21 marks the nonprofit's second annual Earth Day Celebration with a "Get in the Loop" theme: "the full-loop connections between the economy, society and the planet, and how to support them sustainably."

Believe it or not, this is the first Zero Waste event for the county, which means that there will be nothing on site than can't be either recycled or composted. Zero Waste is the concept that we can design, use and dispose products without the need of a landfill, like nature does. If one day can produce zero waste, then why not a year?

The celebration promises to be an amazing community collaboration. The Green Art Exhibit will showcase student creations related to community connectivity. The "Do the Loop" course, sponsored by The Greenery and Coastal Discovery Museum, is a fun competition for all ages with learning activities about environmental stewardship for our planet. The Green Resources Expo, sponsored by Hilton Head Glidden, will showcase the latest products and services to help you achieve a greener lifestyle. There is still space available for exhibitors to showcase nonprofits and organizations that contribute to the community with green products or services until April 18. There will also be a Green Transportation Station to showoff electric and sustainably-powered vehicles from Stokes Brown Toyota of Hilton Head.

The Celebrate Community program begins at 4 p.m. with the unveiling of the multi-million dollar Shelter Cove Mall Redevelopment Project and special performances. Great Art awards and the Do The Loop winner will be announced here.

Commute to the event by bike and the bike valet will take care of it while you enjoy the festival. You can help fundraise for Green Experience by bringing your laptops, cell phones and ink cartridges for recycling. Also, don't miss out on performances and yoga going on at the Celebration Stage.

Event admission is \$5 for adults and free for kids under 12 years old. Shelter Cove Community Park from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Find more information and detail at www.experiencegreen.org.

Runners can get their fix at the Greer Earth Day half marathon, 10K and 5K on April 21. Visit www.greerearthdayrun.com

Defend our forests with the Canopy Project, an initiative to plant a million trees in countries where reforestation is most urgently needed. It's only \$1 to buy a tree! Visit www.earthday.org/campaign/canopy-project

Calculate your carbon footprint as an avatar through an interactive quiz on www.earthday.org/footprint-calculator.

Can't leave the smartphone at home? Use the GPS to step outside and find a boxed treasure—**geocaching**; it's a legit treasure hunt in town! Check out www.geocaching.com" www.geocaching.com.

Kayaking, hike, swim, fish, paddleboard, look for seashells, watch birds, learn about wildlife all at your local **Hunting Island State Park**. This month Hunting Island also presents "A Perfect Girl's Weekend," a coastal skills clinic for women, and the park scavenger hunt "Ranger Quest." Of course, the **Nature Center** always has interesting programs going on Tuesdays through Saturdays.

Before a world can change, a community must change; and before a community can change, you must change. Inspire someone close to you. Breathe it all in.

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