World Environment Day

Earth Day

Every year on April 22nd, people in the United States celebrate *Earth Day*. Earth Day began in 1970 as a special time to think about our planet and how we can help protect nature and the environment. From planting trees and gardens to starting recycling and composting programs at home and at school, Earth Day *motivates* or inspires many people to do good things for our earth. But what about the rest of the world? Do other countries celebrate Earth Day too? Some do, but many more countries celebrate *World Environment Day!*

World Environment Day

World Environment Day is like Earth Day for the whole world. It happens every year on June 5th, and different cities around the world take turns *hosting* or holding World Environment Day festivals and activities. In past years, World Environment Day was hosted in cities like Barcelona, Spain; Tokyo, Japan; and Moscow, Russia! People from all over the world traveled to these cities to participate in fun activities that celebrate the protection of our planet. Ever since World Environment Day started in 1972, festivals have been held in many different countries but never in the United States. This year however, it's different. For the first time in history, World Environment Day will be hosted in the United States. As a matter of fact, World Environment Day is being hosted in San Francisco, California!

Who started World Environment Day?

World Environment Day was started by the *United Nations*, also called the U.N. The United Nations was formed in 1945 after the end of World War II. It was created to bring together countries of the world so that they could find peaceful solutions to their differences, instead of fighting wars. The U.N. works on many different issues such as ending world hunger, creating world peace, and helping protect the environment.

The Birthplace of the United Nations

In 1945, fifty countries from around the world signed a *charter* or a special document that formed the beginning of the United Nations. Representatives from these countries met to discuss the role and responsibilities of the United Nations and signed the charter on June 26, 1945. They signed it at the War Memorial House in San Francisco, California, and this marked the birth of the United Nations!

60 Years Old

The United Nations will turn sixty years old in 2005. To celebrate this historic birthday, the United Nations has selected San Francisco as

the place to host World Environment Day. This is the first time World Environment Day will ever be held in the United States and it's a big deal! Mayors from countries around the world like Egypt, China, Russia and Holland will come to San Francisco from June 1-5, 2005 to learn about things they can do in their cities to help protect nature and the environment.

Green Cities

The theme of this year's World Environment Day is "Green Cities." Does this mean cities are colored green like the Emerald City in the movie *The Wizard of Oz*? No! The word *green* means the color green, but it can also mean *environmentally friendly*, or good for the environment. The year 2005 will mark the first time in human history that more people will be living in cities than in *rural* or country areas. As a matter of fact, every week, one million (1,000,000) people move into cities! Because of this, it's now more important than ever to make sure we live in cities that are healthy for us and for the planet as well. That means making sure cities do things like: recycle, compost, plant trees, conserve energy, provide public transportation like buses and trolleys, use clean energy from the sun and wind, and build "green" buildings.
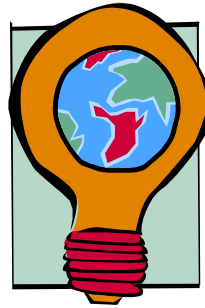
The Accords

When the mayors from all over the world come to San Francisco to celebrate World Environment Day, they will sign a special document called *The Urban Environmental Accords. Urban* means "city" and *accords* means "agreements." So basically, The Urban Environmental Accords is just a fancy way of saying "agreements to make cities more environmentally friendly!"

Think Globally, Act Locally

There are many big problems facing our world. However, if each of us make changes in our own homes, schools, towns and cities to protect our environment, our actions will add up and make a positive difference around the world! That's the meaning of the phrase: "Think globally, act locally."

The Urban Environmental Accords that the mayors will sign in June 2005 contain a list of activities mayors will do in their own cities to help protect the environment. This is one way for them to think globally and act locally. Just imagine…if one hundred mayors from large cities around the world agreed to recycle, compost and use energy from the sun, it would do A LOT of good for our planet!

World Environment Day and You

There will be many activities held in San Francisco from June 1-5, 2005 to celebrate World Environment Day. Children of all ages will be participating in garden projects, beach clean-ups, and an art and poetry contest called "River of Words." To learn more about events planned for World Environment Day, visit www.wed2005.org

We all have the power to protect our planet. By learning what we can do, and getting involved in World Environment Day, we can make a world of difference!