

CELEBRATING EARTH DAY

Earth Day must extend beyond one day

The latest in a long line of vacuous MTV trends is to "go green." Everyone from Wal-Mart to the scenester jerks that crowd our halls has purportedly turned tree-hugger.

For now, we will overlook the fact that the phrase "go green" doesn't really make any sense when you actually think about it (last we checked, green wasn't a place).

To "go green" supposedly translates as "to adopt a lifestyle of increased environmental awareness and consciousness," but wrapped up in a cute little buzz-phrase ready for Gap and Honda commercials.

This new eco-hipster trendiness is a positive thing on the surface.

At least more people are becoming "aware" of environmentalism, and "avidly" saving our planet.

All around, people are "going green," doing such benevolent, magnanimous things as installing those neat-o twisted light bulbs, using paper that is partially made from recycled materials, and purchasing automobiles that consume slightly less gasoline and emit slightly less noxious, air-choking clouds (remember when Kermit the Frog was the spokesperson for Jeep?

Yeah it really is easy being green, when you can continue to drive the same SUVs you were before, with only a plastic logo indicating that your gargantuan gas-guzzler is, in fact, eco-friendly).

Ideally, this recently-piqued interest in the environment will expose a new generation, hopefully not too set in their old ways, to the importance of living a sustainable life.

The only way to make a lasting, widespread difference on an entire population is to encourage sustainability to point where it becomes habit, such as we now consider our current hedonistically wasteful lives commonplace.

But let's get real: in a couple years, the masses will have moved onto another fad, and once again the importance of environment preservation will be appreciated by a vastly unheard few.

We'll look back on the '00s and think "Oh my God, we were such dorks back then! Remember

all that tree-hugger stuff? As if!"

What people fail to realize is that there will not be another trend to move onto when we don't have a habitable place to live anymore.

Environmentalism isn't just something we can feign interest in for awhile, and when our interest eventually fades the problem will too.

This is not going away - not by a long shot - and that necessary sense of urgency is noticeably absent from today's "environmental movement." It's all about the image, not about the action.

"But I walk to the store, and I only buy fair trade coffee!"

That's great, Joe Suburb, but you still live in a three-car garage McMansion in the seventh circle of cul-de-sac hell, contentedly gobbling up resources that are far more scarce and valuable than your attitude suggests.

This "everyone can do little things throughout their day to help" concept is not going to cut it anymore if we want to outlast the century, we need a serious, 180 degree lifestyle change. That

means everyone.

So yeah, go ahead and observe Earth Day by planting saplings in Manito Park.

You will feel really good about yourself for about seven minutes. But unless you are willing to abandon your materialistic, utterly empty lifestyle and make a devoted, conscious effort to live sustainably, you should not feel anything about yourself other than guilt, shame and embarrassment.

Earth day is not just a fun, festive excuse to play granola for a day. It should be observed with the same solemnity and severity that we supposedly use with Veteran's and Memorial Day.

We say this in all seriousness because these are holidays to remember the fallen, the sacrificed, and if we do not do something to change our despicably decadent way of life soon, we will be counting our planet, the one place suitable for us to live, among the dead.

Editorial

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Earth Day has come long way, but still has far to go

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LEWIS AND CLARK

Since 1970, Earth Day has served as a platform for concerned citizens everywhere to speak on issues concerning our planet.

It began when environmentalism a little-used and little-understood word in politics. No one talked about oil spills, and pandas were still said to be frolicking happily around China.

Then, Wisconsin senator Gaylord Nelson proposed a nationwide environmental protest to shed light on issues that had lain dormant for years, stewing underneath America's obsession with technology and progress.

The idea took root and soon spread from coast to coast. Young people across the country served at the frontlines of this new battle.

Colleges and universities became hubs of activism rivaling in size those of the Vietnam War. The youth of America showed the crusty old guys that they had something to say.

Nearly 20 million demonstrators took to parks and auditoriums across the country, calling for action to stop the slow destruction of a newly blemished Earth.

All sorts of boundaries were crossed; Democrats and Republicans worked together to support a thoroughly liberal idea, farmers demonstrated with businessmen, and everybody loved the planet. Individuals suddenly became one much more powerful entity: environmentalists. The green age had somehow stumbled into existence.

If not for these grassroot beginnings, we would not have the environmentalism of today. White House policies would be even worse, and we might never have known the glory that is an Al Gore PowerPoint.

Earth Day began because a Wisconsinite had a thought and

said something. Other people heard him and thought, "Hey, I thought that was weird too," and a movement began. Now Earth Day is celebrated in more than 180 countries around the world.

However, sometimes it seems difficult to be progressive in little ol' Spokaloo. Our town has a general lack of events on Earth Day, even though we are surrounded by mountains and rivers.

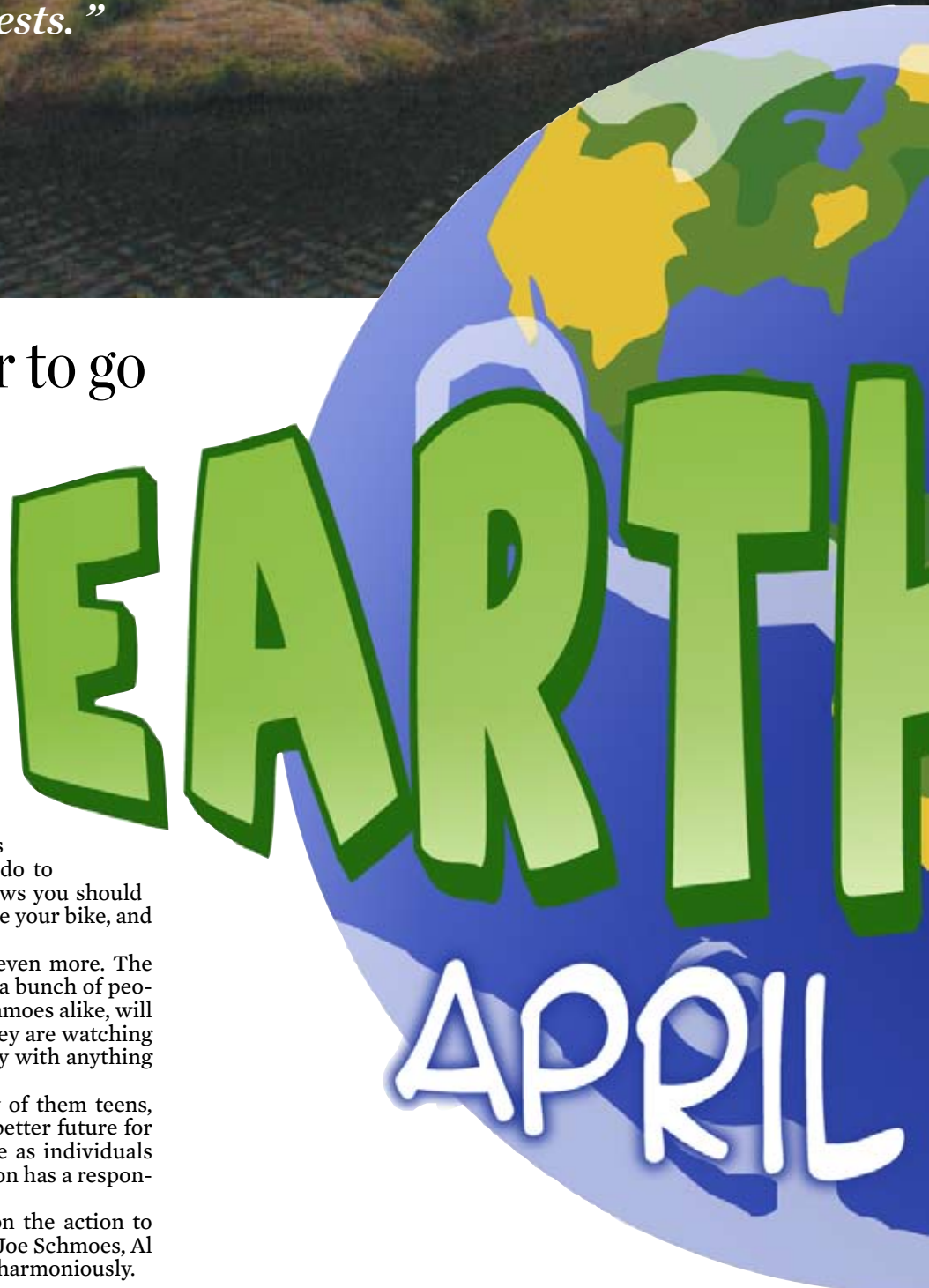
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Environmentalism is downright hip in high schools nowadays, but teens often do not know what to do to actually help. Everyone knows you should use the swirly light bulbs, ride your bike, and recycle yogurt cups.

This April 22, we can do even more. The concept of Earth Day is that a bunch of people, tree-huggers and Joe Schmoes alike, will join together to show that they are watching and will not let them get away with anything fishy. Or anti-fishy.

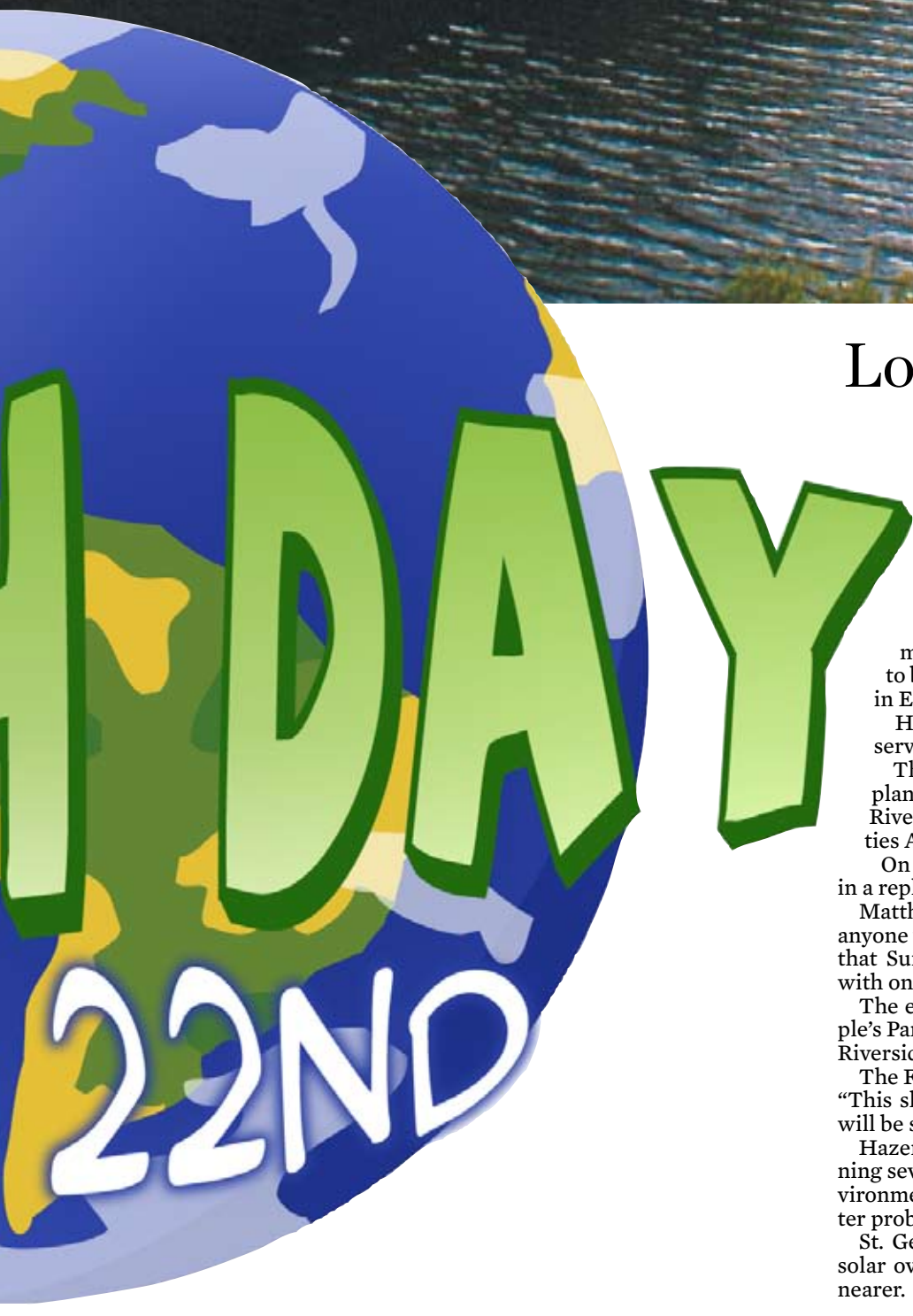
Millions of activists around the world, many of them teens, will partake in an event that aims at creating a better future for our planet. It will be a display of the ability we as individuals have to bring change to the world. Our generation has a responsibility to help the planet we have inherited.

This Earth Day, do your part by joining in on the action to bring about change for a greener world that the Joe Schmoes, Al Gores, and pandas alike can all one day frolic in harmoniously.



EARTH DAY 2008

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LEWIS AND CLARK



Local schools plan celebrations of Earth Day

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HOMESCHOOLED

Just a few years ago, the only people that paid much attention to Earth Day were hippies, tree-huggers and environmentalists. But now because of heightened awareness to climate change and the environment in general, it is cool to be eco-friendly. A large amount of the people involved in Earth Day are youths, and Spokane is no different.

Here is a sampling of how some area schools are observing, and celebrating Earth Day 2008.

The ecologically-minded West Valley City School is planning an Earth Day "Bike Train" from the school to Riverfront Park for the park's scheduled Earth Day activities April 19, via the Centennial Trail.

On Sunday, April 20, the students are also participating in a replanting and clean-up of People's Park.

Matthew Phillipy, a science teacher at City School, said that anyone who would like to help can join them at People's Park that Sunday. The clean up and replanting will correspond with one planned by the Lands Council.

The event will take place from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. at People's Park in Peaceful Valley, at the Intersection of Clarke and Riverside.

The Ferris High School Ecology Club is recycling T-shirts. "This shirt has been 100% recycled by the Recycling Club" will be silk-screened on each shirt.

Hazen Audel, the group's adviser, said they are also planning several movies for a movie night that will showcase environmental issues. They are also addressing an ongoing litter problem by organizing a litter clean-up.

St. George's physics and engineering classes are building solar ovens. More events will be added as Earth day grows nearer.

The Geosoph Club at Lewis and Clark High School is planning to celebrate Earth Day during the week of the 22nd.

On Monday they are focusing on energy conservation. Tuesday they will dress up as their favorite animal and distribute native plant seeds. Wednesday the focus is on sustainable foods. Thursday will be alternate transportation day, with groups of students meeting at parks and walking to school.

Friday there will be a final celebration, including a party at a community center. All students are invited.

Gonzaga Prep will continue with an ongoing recycling program.

Some people only get involved in the environment on Earth Day. If this describes you, you can make Earth Day every day by just making a few changes in your daily life. Not only will you have a clean green conscience, but you will probably save some money and live a healthier life.

Walking, biking or carpooling are obvious but simple changes. Check out garage sales and thrift stores for clothing and other usable items, instead of buying new. Use farmers' markets whenever possible; these support your local growers and conserve energy as well.

There are plenty of ways you can get involved and make a difference, for both the planet and your community. One easy way to get involved would be to contact to your environmental science teacher at school and help plan a project or event.

A replanting, recycling, or clean-up (litter or trash) project around your school can be helpful and fun.

You could also contact the chapter of the local Sierra Club and get involved with their activities, or volunteer your time helping West Valley City School with its project at People's Park.

