

Let's plant Cootes and new beach trail

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The modern-day notion of publicly celebrating the Earth emerged with the first official Earth Day held in the United States on April 22, 1970.

The celebrations exploded out of a burgeoning environmental movement made up of a growing number of citizens who had acknowledged the need for all of us to commit to the remediation and protection of the environment around us.

These citizens wisely recognized that our very health and well-being depended on such commitments.

Thirty-three years later, Earth Day is an event celebrated around the globe.

While many people -- me included -- will argue that every day should be Earth Day, this one-day celebration serves the important purpose of reminding us all about the need to make sound environmental habits a part of our daily lives.

The fact that Earth Day has gone "mainstream" is a testament to the success of this event.

Here in Hamilton, we are now enjoying our seventh year of formal Earth Day celebrations, thanks to the ongoing dedication of the event's volunteer organizing committees over the years.

Local businessman Larry Pomerantz deserves particular recognition for his dogged determination in establishing Earth Day and his ongoing commitment to growing it into the impressive event it is today.

The centrepiece of Earth Day here is the annual Eco-Festival -- an event that focuses on helping young people understand what they can do to respect and protect the Earth.

This is an incredibly important task, achieved through Earth Day workshops, displays, and keynote speakers.

With the big day only a week from today, participating Hamilton area students are preparing themselves to participate in an incredible event.

The Earth Day Hamilton organizing committee has pulled together yet another day chock full of wonderful opportunities for young Hamiltonians to learn about how to treat the Earth with tender loving care.

This year, the already-filled-to-capacity event will include a keynote address from our own Canadian guru of the environment, Dr. David Suzuki.

Suzuki has a profound ability to help people understand how intimately connected we are to the environment around us.

As he so frequently points out, respect for the environment around us amounts to protection of

the very life support system to which we are inextricably connected.

Suzuki's talk, Challenge of the 21st Century: Setting the Bottom Line, is sure to provide students with plenty of food for thought and to motivate them to go out into our community and take action to protect our environment.

If you are looking for other ways to get involved in Earth Day celebrations, consider participating in one of the other events scheduled as part of Earth Week.

Several concerts are being held to help raise the funds necessary to make Earth Day celebrations reality.

The concerts take place April 25 and feature bands such as Bad Religion, the Casualties, Warsawpack, the Fat Cats, and Diesel Dog. You can call the Earth Day Hamilton office at 905-522-4708 for more details.

Earth Week also begins and ends with Saturday volunteer planting days, offering Hamiltonians a wonderful opportunity to participate in hands-on efforts that will make a difference right away.

This Saturday, the whole family can roll up their sleeves and participate in a community planting event designed to help with the ongoing restoration of Cootes Paradise marsh.

And once the planting is done, you'll be amply rewarded for your efforts. There will be wagon rides, an eco-scavenger hunt, barbecue, face painting, and draws for prizes.

Another community planting event will be held April 26 to help restore the natural dune habitat along the new Hamilton Beach recreational trail.

For both these events, you'll need to dust off your gardening shovel and bring a pair of gloves along. You can call the Bay Area Restoration Council at 905-527-7111 for more information.

Earth Day is definitely every day of the year. But the festivities scheduled for next week give us all the opportunity to have some fun, learn something new, and get our hands dirty -- all in an effort to make this planet a better place for us, our children, and our children's children.

Do what you can to help. The Earth will thank you.

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