

ENVIRONMENTAL

Earth Day:

-by Lark McMillan, staff writer-

In 1970, 20 million people gathered across the country to celebrate the first Earth Day in American history. The idea for Earth Day came from Senator Gaylord Nelson, who recognized the need for protecting the environment. He thought a national observance of Earth Day was needed, especially after several disturbing environmental problems of the 1960s occurred, including DDT, air pollution, and the Cuyahoga River catching on fire. He appointed a young Stanford graduate to organize Earth Day and hosted a spectacular event in Washington, DC. Congress was adjourned on April 22, 1970, so Senators could go home to speak at rallies and teach-ins across the nation.

The first Earth Day was perhaps responsible for the development of the Environmental Protection Agency and a number of other environmental organizations by bringing awareness of the Earth's dire state to the forefront. Since 1970, political campaigns have addressed relevant environmental issues. Earth Day is still celebrated every April throughout America.

Brevard College has been celebrating Earth Day for years, but the celebrations have only recently become a yearly event to be counted on. In

Brevard College Festivities April 21-26, 2003

1995, Earth Day was organized by students Beth Suttles, now a faculty member, and Brad McCarley. This huge one-day event had bands, craft sales, and 3 willow trees were planted by Kings Creek. There was also a lecture series titled "Our Time has Come: Environmental Studies at Brevard College."

Since 1995, the Earth Day celebrations have continued, sponsored by a number of different organizations and featuring a variety of activities. One consistency, however, are tree plantings. Over 150 trees have been planted on campus, as well as a number of bushes and shrubs. Also at each Earth Day celebration are information tables. Some of these include the Cradle of Forestry, Transylvania Recycling Center, and the Sierra Club, all of which provide information about the local and national environments.

Beth Suttles, former BC student and Biology Lab instructor, has helped plan every Earth Day celebration at Brevard since 1995. She thinks celebrating Earth Day is important and has become "addicted" to planning events for Earth Day. She says, "Every day should be Earth Day, but once a year is easier for some people to observe or commit to. It is a way to respect our world and try to learn as much as we can about it and protect it. By opening people's eyes to

things they take for granted, we plant a seed for an environmental ethic in their minds and hearts. I think that preservation can only come through education and that is why I do what I do."

This year many interesting events will take place during the week of April 21-26. Earth Day is actually celebrated on April 22. The preliminary schedule offers many exciting events:

April 21: Campus Beautification, meet at the Bell Tower at 1:00 p.m. or 3:00 p.m.

April 22: Smoke Out & Drive Free Day. From 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. there will be a cleanup on King's Creek. Lunch will be served on Taylor Lawn, where there will also be music, information tables, and a recycling relay. From 1:00 – 6:00 p.m. there will be a Swap Meet, where you can trade clothes you don't want or need any more. Leftovers will be given to charity.

April 23: At noon there will be a Campus Clean-up. The Outing Club will be sponsoring a hike at 1:00 p.m. and from 2:00 – 5:00 p.m. the water quality of the Davidson River will be examined.

April 24: From 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. there will be another King's Creek Clean-Up. From 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Sam Kroiz will be leading a hike and from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. he

will be leading another hike. During dinner at the Cafeteria, an information table will be set up called "Animal Shelters and Overpopulation."

April 25: From 3:30-4:30 p.m. there will be a Herpetology Study.

April 26: There will be a plant sale at Sims Art Building from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. At 10:00 a.m. there will be a tree planting. From 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., there will be papermaking and a trash art contest on the quad between Jones and Beam. At 1:00 p.m., there will be another tree planting.

There is also a lecture scheduled for April 29, sponsored by Pastimes. The speaker is Hugh Irwen and he will be speaking on "Biodiversity of Southern Appalachians," at 6:30 p.m. in the Porter Center.

Everyone at Brevard is encouraged to take place in Earth Day happenings. These events, though they only take place once a year, are an important reminder to take care of the earth. Gaylord Nelson, founder of Earth Day, said this about Earth Day: "So long as human species inhabit the Earth, proper management of its resources will be the most fundamental issue we face. Our very survival will depend on whether or not we are able to preserve, protect, and defend our environment... That was the great lesson of Earth Day. It must never be forgotten."

Tennessee

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life I dream of having forever, I thought, as I floated off into a deep sleep.

Early Sunday morning we woke up to the sound of rain falling on our tent. Discouraged by the weather, we huddled into our sleeping bags for a few more hours of sleep. Finally, at day break, we found that the rain had stopped and our paddling was to begin right on schedule. We packed up our tent, loaded our gear into the boat, and headed off to the river. Skipping breakfast, we paddled away from our campsite to a downstream goal. If our rate of travel was constant, we would reach our campsite by noon, making the takeout at the dam a goal for late afternoon.

So, we continued paddling through the gorge. The scenery was the same—mountains with rocky tops, trees of many colors, birds flying. The water was almost eerily calm. We contemplated the river in its natural state when it was actually free flowing. At one point we paddled over what used to be a treacherous rapid, now only a

figment of our imagination, 50 or more feet under the water. We tried to figure out what the river would have looked like before the great flood of TVA. It was beyond my imagination. The river, as I have always known it and probably always will, is just a series of lakes, water impounded by structures. Granted, these dams provide cheap power to the Tennessee residents, but they are not natural. For the rest of the day, a cloud was in my head, as I contemplated the old days of true wildness.

At lunch we stopped on a dock of an uncompleted home, figuring that the owners wouldn't mind. We watched as a five story riverboat made its way downstream. We realized that we were only a mile from our campsite, so we decided to push on to the take out. We were no longer in the gorge. There were homes and people once more, but we still paddled in peace. We had the calm of the morning with us and the wind was at our backs. The paddling became hard though, since we were at the head of Nickajack Lake. There was no current and we could see for miles. Our

muscles were tired, but our desire was strong, so we kept paddling. We paddled under the interstate once more, stopped for one final break, then pushed on for the last few miles.

We had a major lake crossing ahead of us, and at the end of the day, those were the hardest miles. We could see the other side of the lake and the shore seemed further away with every stroke. I got into a groove, finding my rhythm, and took off. I turned around to see Rachel just sitting there, not paddling. She had zoned out, lost in thought, and I reeled her back in. "Come on," I told her. "Let's keep going." She picked up the paddle and we moved on, side by side until we were once again beside the shore. We stopped every now and then to eat a Snickers or converse. I would sing a song or two, but stop frequently because I was laughing so hard. We were mostly smiles and a few grimaces and groans, as we rounded a point to see our take out. Rachel's green Saturn awaited us, but we still had a ways to go.

Distance on lakes is deceiving. It looked as though we were only min-

utes from the car, but in truth it was about half an hour before we would find our feet on soil again. But we paddled slowly, remembering all of the hours previous. We worked hard to get to the take out, paddling twenty-three miles in a day. Our bodies reflected this, but we were still happy.

As I thought about the stink of the river at the beginning, the graceful birds that accompanied us downriver, the dock where we ate lunch, the riverboats, the barges, the laughter, and every other thing we experienced, I was thankful for my life. I was, unlike the river, free and full of adventure. There were no concrete structures holding me back or forcing me off course. I followed my own path and felt like I could accomplish anything.

We paddled in silence to the car, listening to the music coming from a bluegrass festival at the take out. "I'm alive and kicking because Jesus is alive in me," the musicians sang. I looked at Rachel with a bewildered, silly grin and thought to myself, "No, I'm alive and kicking because nature is alive in me."