

Remember Earth Day?

Gapers Block- [Ask the Librarian](#), April, 20 2006, by Alice Maggio

Remember Earth Day? In the United States Earth Day takes place on April 22, and it is intended to be a day to raise awareness of environmental issues and inspire people to take action in their communities and their lives to protect the environment and natural resources.

The first Earth Day took place in 1970, and it was founded by Gaylord Nelson, a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin. He was born in Clear Lake, Wisconsin in 1916, and later earned a law degree from the University of Wisconsin. He began his political career as a Wisconsin state senator in 1948 and was elected governor in 1958. Then, from 1963 to 1981, Nelson served as a U.S. Senator. Throughout his years of political service, Nelson was a staunch advocate for conservancy and environmental issues. Gaylord Nelson died last year at the age of 89, just a couple of months after the 35th anniversary of the annual event he founded.

Earth Day doesn't seem to get much press these days, but organizations around the Chicago area have not forgotten. Dozens of Earth Day events are planned for this Saturday, April 22, and many local groups are looking for volunteers to help out. The following events are just a few examples of how you can get involved this year.

Special Earth Day Events

Brookfield Zoo's Earth Day Extravaganza

On Saturday, April 22, between 10am and 3pm, Brookfield Zoo is marking the occasion with a wide variety of events throughout the zoo, including music, special tours and a parade. Visit [the zoo website](#) for complete details.

Chicago Kayak Earth Day 2006

Members and friends of the Chicago Kayak Club are meeting on Saturday, April 22, at the Skokie Lagoons for the club's annual Earth Day clean-up event. The Forest Preserve District of Cook County will be providing gloves, sticks and garbage bags to volunteers to help pick up trash around the lagoons. Everyone is welcome to join the event,

which runs from 9am to 1pm. See [the Chicago Kayak Club website](#) for full details.

Chicago Park District Earth Day Celebration

The Chicago Park District has a [complete list of parks hosting Earth Day clean-up projects](#) this Saturday. Most of the clean-up events start at 9am and finish at noon. See the calendar on the website to find a park near you that needs volunteers.

Friends of the Forest Preserves Earth Day 2006

The Friends of the Forest Preserves of Cook County have a lengthy list of events and activities taking place at preserves around the Chicago area on Earth Day. These include clean-ups, restoration work and plantings. Visit [the website](#) to find out how to get involved at a site near you on Saturday.

Other Ways to Get Involved

Of course, protecting our natural resources is more than a once-a-year commitment. Organizations throughout the area depend on volunteers all year round to help preserve our natural lands and habitats. The following websites give some idea of the variety of volunteer opportunities available in the region.

[Chicagoland Environmental Network](#)

The Chicagoland Environmental Network website is a great place to start looking for a way to get involved in local environmental and conservancy organizations. The site lists volunteer, job and internship opportunities available with more than 200 different local groups. From office and clerical help to habitat restoration, volunteer positions are available for a wide variety of abilities and interests.

[Friends of the Chicago River](#)

Are you handy with a canoe? Then consider becoming a volunteer canoe guide with Friends of the Chicago River. Visit the website to find out more.

[Illinois Sierra Club](#)

The Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club hosts a weekly volunteer night

during the summer at the group's office on Michigan Avenue. In return for a couple hours of work, volunteers are promised free pizza and beer. Check out the website for contact information and complete details.

[Volunteer Stewardship Network](#)

The Nature Conservancy in Illinois and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission formed this network of volunteer groups in 1983, and it is still going strong, with more than 5,000 active participants from around Illinois. Visit [The Nature Conservancy website](#) to find out how, when and where you can get involved.

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Join the Gapers Block Book Club! Just [sign up for the email list](#) for news, announcements and more. And, visit the [book club forum](#) to discuss the book online. This month we are reading *Near West Side Stories: Struggles for Community in Chicago's Maxwell Street Neighborhood* by Carolyn Eastwood. And, author Carolyn Eastwood is scheduled to join us to discuss the book on Monday, May 8, at [The Book Cellar](#), located at 4736 N. Lincoln Ave. The meeting will begin at 7:30pm.