

WHY EARTH DAY?



On April 22, 1970, the first Earth Day was celebrated in the United States. It is estimated that 20 million people celebrated the first Earth Day. Since that time, Earth Day has become a worldwide event that is celebrated by more than half a billion people. Why is Earth Day important? Because it

reminds us of our personal responsibility to protect and defend the purity and safety of this beautiful, wonderful planet.

The founder of Earth Day, Senator Gaylord Nelson (1916-2005), was a man who believed in every person's right to clean water, soil and air. In the 1960s, Sen. Nelson became very concerned about the ways in which our government and industries were using natural resources (water, trees, minerals) and creating new chemicals and technology—yet not dealing with the pollution they were causing as part of those activities.

For years, Sen. Nelson talked to government, business and educational leaders, trying to find a way to get people to pay attention to what was happening to the Earth.

To his credit, Sen. Nelson's passion and dedication paid off. Because of him—and the work of many millions who joined him in celebrating Earth Day—important laws were passed to change the way industry and government use natural resources and dispose of pollution. In 1995, Sen. Nelson was awarded The

Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor given to a civilian in The United States. On that day, then-President William Jefferson Clinton said these words:

"Twenty-five years ago...Americans came together for the very first Earth Day. They came together to make it clear that dirty air, poison water, spoiled land were simply unacceptable. They came together to say that preserving our natural heritage for our children is a national value. And they came together, more than anything else, because of one American—Gaylord Nelson...As the father of Earth Day, he is the grandfather of all that grew out of that event—the Environmental Protection Act, the Clear Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act...In the 1970s, when a river was so polluted it actually caught on fire, Gaylord Nelson spoke up. He insisted that Americans deserved the safety that comes from knowing the world we live in will not make us sick...He inspired us to remember that the stewardship of our natural resources is the stewardship of the American Dream..."

Although millions have followed in Sen. Nelson's footsteps, we are far from achieving his dream of a clean, poison-free environment. Our abuse of natural resources and our creation of pollution is still going strong, and it will take the work and dedication of all of us to change it. You can do your part by learning more about the environment and pollution, and then acting on that knowledge.

It is the hope of the creators of Rustle the Leaf Environmental Comics—and our sponsors, Citra-Solv, LLC.—that you will become the next person to join this cause. Celebrate life. Enjoy the Earth. And always remember Senator Gaylord Nelson: one single person who made an amazing difference.

RUSTLE THE LEAF™

BY PONCE & WRIGHT

