

THE BATTALION

Earth Day celebration focuses on awareness

By Melissa McKeon
THE BATTALION

In 1970, U.S. Sen. Gaylord Nelson turned concern about the environment into a grassroots-level campaign through a series of college campus sit-ins that became known as Earth Day. The issues Nelson embraced in 1970 and the years before the first Earth Day remain today, and environmental groups on the Texas A&M campus are trying to keep those issues at the forefront of April 22 Earth Day celebrations.

Organizations on campus will come together in an Environmental Forum sponsored by the Environmental Issues Committee Thursday at 6 p.m. in Koldus 144. Other organizations participating in the forum are the National Association of Environmental Professionals, Replant and Cool Aggies for Recycling.

"We wanted to get the environmental community together in a forum where they can network," said Amy Courtney, president of the Environmental Issues Committee. "We have some small committees, and it can be difficult to make changes. (With this forum) we can pool our resources."

The forum's main goal is for other students to become more aware of environmental groups on campus, Courtney said.

Some major issues still on the Earth Day agenda include threats to wildlife, increasingly polluted water, vanishing forests and climate change.

President Bush's Clear Skies Initiative, unveiled in February, will help set mandatory caps on toxic fume emissions from automobiles and plants, lessen the health effects from particles in

the air and deliver earlier reductions than would be achieved with the current law.

A Planet Earth Celebration is set for April 20 at Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheater. One of the co-sponsors of the celebration is the Texas A&M Recycling Center, which handles all recycling on the A&M campus.

"At this time we [the Texas A&M Recycling Center] produce 20 bales from recyclable

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— Samantha Betten
College Station recycling coordinator

materials a week. Each bale weighs approximately 1,100 pounds," said Tom Marshall, acting supervisor of the Recycling Center.

Some of the trash picked up from the campus includes computer jet cartridges and laser toner cartridges. The center is the only program that accepts white paper for recycling.

"We will accept and recycle anything that tears as long as it is not contaminated with food," Marshall said. "That includes books, catalogs, magazines and cardboard."

The Planet Earth Celebration is a community-

wide public education event held annually on the Saturday during Earth Week. The event is sponsored by the cities of Bryan and College Station, Texas A&M and the Brazos Valley Solid Waste Management Agency. It features educational demonstrations and displays on many environmental topics, including resource conservation, tree planting and pollution prevention.

"Some issues we will be discussing are composting, water and energy conservation and recycling," said Samantha Betten, recycling coordinator for College Station. "There will be a lot of information out there."

The city of College Station handled approximately 3,600 tons of recyclable materials last year, Betten said. The recyclables included green brush, steel, clear and opaque plastics, clear and brown glass bottles, as well as magazines, newspapers and car batteries.

The coordinators of the Planet Earth Celebration want to help the community learn how to help the environment.

"Our goal is education," Betten said. "We want to get the word out that being environmentally conscious is very important."

This is the Planet Earth Celebration's seventh year. Activities will include face painting, a T-shirt design contest to determine the 2003 Planet Earth Celebration T-shirt design and bird feeder building.

Children will also be decorating bags from H-E-B with environmental messages that will be used to sack groceries at the supermarket after the event.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Star Scientific Inc. removes 'light' from cigarette labels

WASHINGTON (AP) — Star Scientific Inc. is the first U.S. tobacco company to announce plans to stop identifying their cigarettes as "light" or "ultra-light," which critics say mislead smokers into believing the cigarettes are safer.

The Chester, Va., company sent letters to

other cigarette manufacturers and lawmakers Wednesday that said it would drop the terms from its Vegas brand of cigarettes by the end of September.

Spokesperson Sara Machir said the company will assess whether to remove the terms from its other brands — Main Street, Sport and Gsmoke. Star products account for less than 1 percent of U.S. cigarette sales, Machir said.

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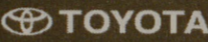

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DEADLINE: 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 24. Turn in application at 014 (basement) Reed McDonald Bldg. Interviews will begin immediately after application deadline.

Extra applications available in the newsroom or online at <http://www.thebatt.com>

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