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## Our responsibility on 'Mother's Day'

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Publisher

Mother's Day is almost here. I mean the day to recognize the mother we all share - the Earth. Back when I was in high school, someone finally got around to setting aside a special day to honor the mother of us all, the one we all depend on for survival, the individual we most take advantage of and choose to ignore until she is frustrated enough to disown us.

The annual observance arrives again Tuesday, but somehow this Earth Day feels different. Political leaders and the people who think they own the place, the global corporate types, seem to be waking up to the fact that the resources of this planet may not be as infinite as they thought they were when they began their quest to exploit Homestead Earth.

A growing awareness of climate change brings hope that the one day devoted to our mother planet will gain the recognition it deserves. It has taken the competition of China and India on the world economic stage to force America's leaders into seeing the effects of continuing exploitation of natural resources on our air, water, soil and mineral reserves. Now that someone else is burning up the resources and doing the polluting, Americans are beginning to say whoa now, you can't mess in the nest like that!

Many communities use Earth Day as a good excuse to promote local efforts to clean up the environment. Athens County is no different. Area residents had several opportunities to take part in last week's Earth Week events. Lectures, presentations and other events at Ohio University highlighted the effects of bad environmental policy and what can be done to make a difference.

Athens Beautification Day was celebrated yesterday. Volunteers combed Court Street and many other Athens districts picking up trash. Landscaping projects at the Dairy Barn and in several public places were under way. Paint was applied. Windows were washed. A food drive at Ohio University dorms brought needed supplies to Good Works.

After a lingering winter a few Athens areas need a little attention. As the snows receded, accumulated paper and other trash became more noticeable. Certain areas are particularly bad. A spring stroll along the Athens bike path behind the retail stores on East State Street will give walkers and riders a disappointing view of a winter's windblown trash. Athens Beautification Day, Earth Day and the past week's events give residents and retailers a great opportunity to get a handle on the problem.

Many area businesses, service clubs and other organizations have adopted a stretch of highway or a section of the community to monitor. They often plan a trash-picking outing to coincide with Earth Day.

One other littering item has always bothered me. The smoking ban in Ohio has improved air quality, and I think smokers are more aware of other people's right to breathe, but it has also served to create another problem. Smokers are forced to do their business outside. As they enter a non-smoking area, many think nothing of flipping a burning filter cigarette butt on the ground. For some reason this casual act really burns my butt (sorry about the rather weak and unsolicited pun). The entrances to public structures are littered with cigarette filters. Flower boxes and flower beds become convenient ashtrays for those smokers who, at least, manage to put out their smoke before discarding it. Some don't bother. I've put out more than a few potential blazes from carelessly thrown cigarettes.

The events of the past week show that Athens area folks are concerned about the environment and are willing to roll up their sleeves and make a difference locally. We should recognize the good work accomplished.

We should also thank organizers and sponsors of the many local events that help raise the awareness of the rest of us. Over the last 30 years Earth Day has played a role in getting everyone involved in nurturing, conserving and taking responsibility for the environment we all share.

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