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## The 40th Birthday of Earth Day

What will you be doing on Thursday, April 22? At *CEP*, our critical-path activity will be performing a final on-screen check of the pages that will become the May issue. But we will also make time to celebrate Earth Day. I hope you will, too.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the first Earth Day. In the mid-1960s, U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson sought a way to thrust the environment into the political mainstream. He witnessed environmental degradation across the nation, and realized that everyone seemed to notice except the political establishment. Then in the summer of 1969, amidst the anti-war demonstrations of the time, it struck him — “why not organize a huge grassroots protest over what was happening to our environment,” he wrote in “The History of Earth Day” (<http://earthday.envirolink.org/history.html>).

Approximately 20 million people participated in rallies across the U.S. and protests at thousands of colleges and universities that first year. Nelson later commented, “Earth Day worked because of the spontaneous response at the grassroots level. We had neither the time nor the resources to organize 20 million demonstrators and the thousands of schools and local communities that participated. That was the remarkable thing about Earth Day. It organized itself.” The grassroots nature of this effort is impressive considering the organizing was done by telephone, telegram, and snail-mail, and the news of the day was reported over the wire services — all without the benefit of the Internet.

To promote environmental citizenship and year-round action worldwide, Earth Day Network (EDN; [www.earthday.net](http://www.earthday.net)) was founded by the organizers of the first Earth Day, on the premise that all people have a moral right to a healthy, sustainable environment. EDN estimates that more than 1 billion people in nearly 200 countries participate in Earth Day activities each year.

AICHE will celebrate Earth Day 2010 as a co-sponsor of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) National Sustainable Design Exposition taking place in tents on the National Mall in Washington, DC, April 24–25 (*CEP*, Mar. 2010, p. 74). Throughout the two-day event, more than 50 companies, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) will exhibit their diverse approaches to sustainability. Teams of undergraduate students taking part in EPA’s People, Prosperity and the Planet (P3) Award competition will demonstrate projects that apply innovative technology to address global environmental challenges, such as: alternative energy; collection, purification and distribution of water; agricultural practices to reduce pesticide runoff; and more. For more information, see [www.epa.gov/P3/expo](http://www.epa.gov/P3/expo). We hope you can join us.

If a trip to Washington, DC, is not convenient, you may consider participating in one of the many other events taking place across the country. The Internet is full of ideas; two places to start are <http://earthday.org/take-action> and [www.earthday.net/node/13689](http://www.earthday.net/node/13689).

I offer this call to action in the words of environmentalist Dave Foreman: “Do something. Pay your rent for the privilege of living on this beautiful, blue-green, living Earth.”

Cynthia F. Mascone,  
Editor-in-Chief

