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Take responsibility for our Earth

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April 27, 2009

Another Earth Day has passed. The expos are over. The endless stories about going green have disappeared. Did the lessons of Earth Day stick this time around?

There are lots of tangible signs that the concept will last more than a day or a week. A perfect example is in Pingree Grove. Last week, the Citizens Utility Board gave the village 250 compact fluorescent light bulbs in its Get Green contest. The village was only one of 10 communities to receive CUB's Bright Future award.

Pingree has taken other steps to go green. Its police station is LEED -- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design -- certified, and the village built a new storm water management system in the heritage district.

A few weeks ago, Elgin launched its Sustainability Master Plan project, where volunteers are looking at different topics, from waste management to urban design, to help improve the environment and the community. It is one of the largest efforts in the area.

If you start considering the facts surrounding the environment -- for example, how plastic bottles are clogging landfills -- it's scarier than any horror movie.

According to a Best Life article, "only 3 to 5 percent of plastics are recycled in any way" and plastics "never go away." You can't burn plastic because of the toxins in it, the article states. So you really can't recycle them, experts say.

Then there's global warming.

Whether or not you agree with former Vice President Al Gore, just doing a simple Google search reveals the state of polar ice cap melting.

Then there's all the marine wildlife that is becoming extinct or how some marine mammals are developing human illnesses, like cancer, due to the toxic waste in our oceans.

I have to admit I've never been an environmentalist. I try to recycle at home. I have two garbage cans, one for garbage and one for recycling. Sometimes, I don't sort the garbage. I buy those recycle bags, but forget to take them to the store. I don't buy organic. I have one of those gas-guzzling SUVs. I buy plastic water bottles. I love my air conditioner on hot summer days. And I tend to take long showers.

I'm trying to change some of these habits, because at some point, we all need to take responsibility for what is happening to our environment. A few local environmentalists and environmental science teachers I interviewed recently talked about making the connection between our actions and the effects on the Earth.

I know I can't ignore that connection anymore. Can any of us?

[Reusable Water Bottles Help Reduce, Reuse, Recycle](#)

From Diets In Review Diet Column

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