



**Above**

Tree Slide and Trout Stream located at EEC

## Earth Day Celebrates 50th Anniversary by Angela Goodson

Instead of a celebration, though, did Earth really just send us to our rooms to think about what we've done?

With local and global Earth Day festivities cancelled, it sure feels that way! Can Earth Day 2020, instead, become a time for us to reflect on our current carbon footprint?

Earth Day was first celebrated in 1970 and events are now held WORLDWIDE in more than 193 countries to demonstrate support for environmental protection and raise awareness about pollution. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Clean Air, Clean Water and the Endangered Species acts were born of Earth Day.

In 1991 Indiana's solid waste districts were established and charged with aiding residents in reducing household trash headed to landfills. To meet reduction goals, the Lake County Solid Waste Management District (LCSWMD) provides grant dollars to Lake County's municipalities for curbside recycling and works with each to track recycling and facilitate the proper handling of tires, electronics and batteries.

LCSWMD hosts household hazardous waste collection events, leaf drop-off and pick-up programs and manages a compost facility in Gary. Free field trips, classroom visits and summer programs are offered year-round at the Environmental Education Center (EEC) in Hammond. This site is open to the public Tuesday through Friday afternoons where you can slide through the life-sized tree slide, feed the Rainbow Trout in the Indoor Trout Stream or gather free reusables from the ReUZ Room. The annual CAP-A-THON, plastic caps-to-benches recycling program, and the Halloween Costume Swap Shop are programs sponsored by the LCSWMD.

By definition, waste is something we have leftover; something unused or unwanted; a byproduct. Recycling and reusing are simply CHOICES we make when managing our waste. But they are not the only choices we have.

This year's Earth Day celebrations will surely be unique. Continued garbage and recycling pick up have been deemed essential services. But what if you had to live surrounded by the waste you currently make?

Do you find yourself already conserving resources at home? To which waste items are you giving a second thought?

Saving, reusing and conserving are not new concepts but sometimes take a back seat to convenience in our busy lives. While celebrating Earth Day 2020 at home, consider taking a few steps toward a lower-carbon lifestyle. Ditch the plastic storage bags or research "zero waste" and "pre-cycling" in your e-schooling lesson. Reserve those toilet paper and paper towel tubes and design a marble maze! If you begin to rethink your waste, you will quickly learn how resourceful you can be.

LCSWMD's recycling programs are currently on hold but will resume. In the meantime, keep it simple when sorting household recyclables. Rinse plastic, glass and metal and be sure paper and cardboard are free of food residue.

When it is time to get out of the house and get back into our communities, the Environmental Education Center and Indoor Trout Stream sit directly across from Wolf Lake at 2405 Calumet Avenue in Hammond. Come visit! We can celebrate Earth Day, ANY day!