

On April 22, Americans will celebrate that which unites us all: planet Earth. This year marks the 50th year for a global holiday called Earth Day, which actually began as a regional event in San Francisco in 1969. It was created to recognize nature's importance to our collective well-being and encourage the spread of science-based knowledge so that we can act in harmony with this vital-yet-under-appreciated life force.

Every person's health, safety, economics, and the overall enjoyment of life is impacted by the health of our environment. Yet, this fact often gets little attention from local government officials who must also focus on finances, emergency services, road repairs, waste removal, zoning, traffic, and more. In December 2018, the Board of Supervisors of Lower Frederick Township cleared the way for ecological wisdom to help both the legislature and public make informed decisions. They created the Lower Frederick Environmental Advisory Council (EAC). Seven resident volunteers from varied backgrounds were appointed to serve three-year terms. The township is now among 19 others in Montgomery County that has joined the EAC Network (eacnetwork.org). The Council is tasked with identifying the township's natural resources and unique characteristics as well as critical issues and solutions when they arise.

As our society's environmental problems mount, a person can get discouraged. Meanwhile, an old adage says, "If you think you're too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito." In recognition of Earth Day, each member of the Lower Frederick EAC (one of the seven seats is currently vacant) has each shared ONE THING he or she feels is a simple task you can do to help the earth every day:

#1 Monica Strawbridge says: Avoid single-use, plastic water bottles (and reduce plastic use overall). It takes 450 years for a bottle to completely degrade. Globally 1,000,000 plastic bottles are sold every minute. In the United States, only 30% of our own usage is recycled compared to Norway's 97%. It takes 2,000 times more energy to produce bottled water as tap water. Plastic water bottles make up a good portion of ocean waste responsible for killing marine life. Switch to washable, reusable bottles instead. Source: *National Geographic's* "How the Plastic Bottle Went From Miracle Container to Hated Garbage."

#2 Jackie O'Neil says: Use less fossil fuel to heat, cool and power your home. First, buy renewable electric from your power supplier (PECO has an option or there are a few other renewable energy suppliers in our area). Second, lower your thermostat in the winter and raise it in summer. Just a few degrees can save enough money to offset the higher cost of renewable power. Your home's energy use primarily depends on four things: *Type of Heating/Cooling System, Insulation, Home Size, and Temperature Differential* (between indoor and outdoor air). The last is the easiest to address. The Department of Energy estimates you can save as much as 10% a year on heating and cooling by simply turning your thermostat back 7 to 10°F for 8 hours a day from its normal setting or by turning it back a few degrees all the time.

#3 Gary Bonner says: Make your voice heard. Spend some of your COVID-19 stay-at-home time contacting your elected officials to encourage them to take action on climate and environmental issues. Support organizations that advocate for environmental protection. Volunteer your time and encourage others to get involved.

#4. Denise Finney, Secretary, says: Consider what's on your plate: Everyone knows the saying "You are what you eat," but did you know that what you eat also affects the planet? Producing a quarter pound of beef, for instance, requires the same amount of greenhouse gases (those that lead to climate change) as driving your car almost seven miles! Chicken equates to about two and half miles. And beans cut your dinner's climate impact to just a half-mile. Plus large, concentrated animal operations in the United States bring a host of air and water pollution issues, some of which can be conduits for future pandemics. Go meatless for just one dinner a week and you might also improve your own health. See links below for more information: <https://www.ewg.org/meateatersguide/eat-smart>

#5. Warren Jacobs, Vice Chairperson, says: Plant diversity in the landscape. Opt for an ecologically based landscape design for your property. Use indigenous plant species that are host plants for native insects such as butterfly larvae, which in turn feed birds and other wildlife.

#6. Ruth Heil, Chairperson: Raise Your Consciousness. Before you can find a solution, you must first identify a problem. And to do that, you must look and listen. Observation is a critical component of environmental protection. The clues are in the changes. Pay attention to the bird song, the tree's buds, air's fragrance, or soil's sponginess. What differs from yesterday? What thrives? What wilts? Has nature been allowed to exist in the space at all? What does it try to do regard-less? Then, bring any questions that arise to an expert, such as a neighbor who has been appointed to your town's EAC.