

FEATURES

THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 2010

13

Earth Day celebrates its birthday

Activities to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the event — and raise awareness of environmental issues — are planned through the weekend

BY CATHERINE SHU AND SHELLEY SHAN
STAFF REPORTERS

Today marks the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, which was founded by US Senator Gaylord Nelson to increase environmental awareness. In Taiwan, Earth Day will be celebrated through this weekend with a series of events where participants can shop, listen to music, watch films, take in a lecture — or send a message to the government.

Several groups took the opportunity to launch green initiatives yesterday.

The Homemakers' Union and Foundation (主婦聯盟環境保護基金會) urged the public to reduce consumption of water and electricity by 20 liters and 10kWh per day, respectively.

"That would cut carbon dioxide emissions by about 1.73 million tonnes per year," said Mary Chen (陳曼麗), a foundation board member.

According to the foundation, the reductions could be realized by reducing time spent in the shower by 1.5 minutes, and cutting back on computer use by one hour per day and television watching by two hours per day.

Also yesterday, the Tsuei Mama Foundation for Housing and Community Services (崔媽媽基金會) released a statement encouraging house movers to switch to reusable boxes to transport their belongings.

And the Environmental Quality Protection Foundation (環境品質文教基金會) unveiled software that automatically switches computer screens to sleep mode when inactive for five minutes.

Foundation chairman Hsieh Ying-shih (謝英士) said the program can be downloaded for free.



A vendor sells eco-friendly goods and fresh produce at last year's Green Art Market.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ESCENTS

"If the software is installed on 1 million computers, we estimate consumption of electricity would be reduced by 18.94 million kWh per year, which translates to a 12,000-tonne cut in carbon dioxide emissions," Hsieh said.

Earth Day activities scheduled for the weekend include the following:

OPERATION REDUCE CO2

Concerned about the jump in carbon dioxide emissions? Then head over to Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (國立中正紀念堂) on Sunday morning, taking public transportation, a bicycle or by using your own two legs. Operation Reduce CO2 (減碳綠行動) is meant to increase awareness of global warming; organizers hope at least 800 participants will form

a giant carbon dioxide symbol with a downwards-pointing arrow using colored fans in Liberty Square (自由廣場).

Hsu Hsin-hsin (許心欣) of Taiwan Environmental Information Center (台灣環境資訊協會), one of the organizers, says the event represents the impact each individual has on the environment.

"We want it to be a jumping point for discussions," says Hsu. Organizers also hope the image of hundreds of people gathered in front of Liberty Square's main arches will send a message to the government. Despite its relatively small size, Taiwan's per capita carbon dioxide emissions are well above the global average and doubled between 1990 and 2005. Last month, the government pledged to bring carbon dioxide

emissions down by 2020 to 2005 levels of 257 million tonnes, or 30 percent lower than what they are projected to be without intervention.

But Hsu says that the government only pays lip service to the issue and that current levels of pollution are unacceptable.

"A lot of factories make products for export, but the pollution stays in Taiwan," Hsu says.

Before Operation Reduce CO2 can get the government's attention, however, it has to rally the public. Organizers originally aimed for 1,000 participants, but settled on 800 as a more realistic goal for Sunday's gathering.

"I think people get the impression that this is just an issue for environmental groups to worry about and they don't realize how serious it really is," says Hsu.

"We hope that every single person will think about how they can make a difference with small changes in their daily lives, like taking the MRT or using energy-efficient light bulbs," she says. "We want to take advantage of Earth Day to show how each individual can make an impact."

► Operation Reduce CO2 starts at 9:30am on Sunday at Liberty Square in front of Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall. Tel: (02) 2302-1122 X230. On the Net: www.earthday.org.tw/node/767

GREEN ART MARKET (綠色藝術市集)

On Saturday and Sunday, shoppers can check out goods made using environmentally friendly practices at the Taipei Museum of Contemporary Art (台

北當代藝術館). Vendors at the Green Art Market (綠色藝術市集) will include Earth Tree (地球樹), a fair-trade store, Dou Dou Xiang (朵朵香), which sells handwoven jewelry made from seeds gathered in small amounts from plants native to Taiwan, and aromatherapy oils from Escents (伊聖詩).

There will also be a farmer's market offering fresh produce, as well as screenings of films from 11am to 5pm, including *The Cove* and $\pm 2^{\circ}\text{C}$ (正負2度C), a documentary about global warming.

► The Green Art Market will be held this Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 6pm at the Taipei Museum of Contemporary Art, 39 Changan W Rd, Taipei City (台北市長安西路39號). Tel: (02) 2651-2888 X817. On the Net: www.earthday.org.tw/node/769

ACTION FOR EARTH AT ROXY ROOTS

Kick off Earth Day weekend early by taking in Action for Earth at Roxy Roots tomorrow evening. The event features a lineup of artists including DJ MiniJay of Bass Kitchen Taiwan, DJ Chamber of Bass Kitchen UK, Aashtii and DJ Cougar+Point (Summer Aquarian).

► Action for Earth is tomorrow from 11pm to 4am at Roxy Roots, 90 Songren Rd, Taipei City (台北市松仁路90號). The NT\$300 door charge includes an NT\$200 voucher for food or drink. On the Net: www.facebook.com/ActionForEarth or www.roxy.com.tw/zh/home/roxy-roots

For a complete list of events, check out www.earthday.org.tw