

Opinion

Our View

How to celebrate Earth Day

Earth Day is just around the corner so it's a good time to start thinking about how, as individuals, we can support the health of our environment. On Friday, April 22 you might start seeing people out and about cleaning up roads and ditches, buying flowers and trees to plant, or (if the weather allows) walking to work or school.

Founded in 1970, Earth Day was started as an initiative to educate people about environmental issues. The idea is to inform people they do have an impact on the environment, and that pollution is in fact an issue we need to not only be aware of, but also try to limit as much as we can.

Since it's first year of being founded, movements and acts have been put into place, like the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts. These programs have helped to ensure we have clean drinking water, the critters of our world are protected and so much more.

The awareness we have witnessed since the start of Earth Day has helped people understand there is no such thing as a small change. We now know something as simple as recycling can drastically reduce a person's carbon footprint.

The amount of people who participate in Earth Day has grown exponentially throughout the years. We are becoming more and more aware of the effect our human consumption has on our planet, and it is with this knowledge we can provide a safe environment for future generations.

A few things you can do to participate in Earth Day this year are the following: share a ride to work, or if it's feasible bike or walk; take a moment to walk through your neighborhood with a garbage bag and do some clean up; plant some vegetables indoors in preparation for your summer garden; if you haven't already, start recycling, teach your kids or grandkids about Earth Day and the importance of keeping our planet clean; use reusable bags for shopping; make your own compost bin; install energy efficient lighting; and the list goes on and on.

The bottom line is no one likes to see garbage built up in the streets or our air filled with smog. We can see for ourselves what neglecting our environment does. All it takes is one little act to make a very big difference. Is that really too much to ask?

Letters policy

Letters to the editor may be sent to news@thenewsleaders.com or mailed to 1622 11th Ave. S.E., St. Cloud, MN 56304. Deadline is noon Monday. Please include your full name for publication (and address and phone number for verification only.) Letters must be 350 words or less. We reserve the right to edit for space or to not publish.

Embarrassing moments build character

I tend to embarrass myself – a lot. I'm not sure if it's part of my nature or something that has grown within me throughout the years. At any rate, it can certainly be humbling from time to time. In fact, my husband may or may not have been embarrassed to be seen with me in public on an occasion or two because walking a straight line can be challenging for me. I tend to run into people, or walls.

In your teens, embarrassing yourself in public is just about the worst thing that can happen. I remember trying really hard to not say anything that sounded stupid or do anything that would make me look "uncool." Inevitably, there were moments that I failed at this miserably. Like the time I was trying to get that perfect shot in my photography class, so I jumped up on top of the lockers to pose only to, not so gracefully, fall on my face trying to get down. Did I mention it was in front of a boy I liked? Not my smoothest moment.

At the time, you think you will never recover from those moments. They keep you up at night as you replay them over and over in your head. Sometimes, you cringe as you relive a moment that happened 15 or even 20 years ago. But there are life lessons to be learned from these little mishaps if we know how to look at it.

Leanne Loy
Editor



Like my example with the lockers. Maybe if I wasn't trying so hard to impress a boy, I would have been more graceful getting down off those lockers and spared myself the embarrassment.

Embarrassing moments help create the people we become, as long as we don't spend too much time dwelling on them. You can really talk yourself into a depressing place if you don't retrain your brain on how to properly look at those moments.

First, you should take a moment to feel whatever emotion comes to you most naturally. I remember one time when I was about 8 years old, I was staying at a friend's house and she wanted to go biking. I wasn't really the strongest biker at the time and I totally biffed it going down a hill. I was so embarrassed I wouldn't even let my friend's mom see my skinned-up knees.

I was ashamed I wasn't as good of a biker as my friend, but I also remember not really dwelling on it for long. Soon enough we were on to playing something else and the skinned

knees were barely even noticeable. In fact, we started laughing at how silly my face must have looked as I was about to eat the dirt.

I didn't know it at the time, but that moment started building me into the person I am today. The person who can laugh at herself when ridiculous things happen. For example, my brain tends to work faster than my mouth. I'm a writing coach at a college and one day I was working with a student of mine who had a breakthrough. I wanted to congratulate them and tell them how proud I was but I was too excited, what came out of my mouth didn't resemble English. I'm not sure what I said to them but it took us both off guard and the mirrored looks of confusion on both our faces was actually pretty hysterical.

I don't cringe in embarrassment anymore when I think about these moments; I find the humor in them instead. After all, why torture yourself over something you can't control? Both the student and I ended up laughing and that moment is way better to think about than feeling mortified.

My embarrassing little mishaps usually end up with me making another person laugh, or at the very least smile, and honestly, we need more of that in our lives anyway.

Thank you, my eagle-eyed readers

After so many years, to this day I have to pause and think for a millisecond before I write or say the word "thaw." For decades I would always say or write "unthaw."

Just the other day, while perusing a big box of old letters and meandering down Memory Lane, I found this one, dated Jan. 27, 1984, from Belva Miller of Osakis:

"Dear Mr. Dalman

I noticed in some of your writings during the cold weather that you used the expression "unthawed the pipes" several times. Think of it a bit. The opposite of freeze is thaw. So one thaws a frozen thing, not unthaws it. Isn't that right?"

Yes, that's right, Belva Miller. Thank you!

Belva is just one of the eagle-eyed readers (and proofreaders) I've appreciated, depended upon and learned from for so long. They tend to keep me on my toes.

Here are some examples:

"Well, Dennis, I didn't know I was such an old bag," said former Alexandria Mayor Dorothy Kobs on the phone one day.

"What in the world do you mean?" I asked.

"That story you wrote about my life. It says in there that I've been mayor since 1883. Guess it's time to retire. 100 years as mayor is quite enough, don't you think?"

As I sputtered and stammered my apology, good-natured Dorothy burst out laughing. She'd been getting razed all

Dennis Dalman
Reporter



day by friends telling her she sure looks good for her age.

A few years ago, I flubbed a date again. I'm glad to report it was caught before the paper went to press. It was a feature story about an elderly Sartell woman who tutored young students.

In that story, I'd written that she met her husband-to-be in 1448. A proofreader, Carolyn Bertsch, emailed me: "Dennis, I knew that lady was elderly, but I had no idea she was THAT old!"

Oops! I've never been good at numbers. Or typing them. In grade school, when I'd do math (or attempt to), there would be little ant-hills of eraser crumbs all over my desk and the floor. I have the math version of reading dyslexia. Some years ago, a bank clerk told me it's called "discalculus."

Just this week, proofreader Carolyn emailed me again. In a story about a Sartell road project, instead of typing "sanitary utilities" I typed "sanity utilities." I do know the difference – I think.

Hasty word choices and typos, as I've learned the hard way, can be just as bad as quickly-typed numbers.

One day, an Alexandria woman called to ask, "Dennis Dalman, you mean to tell me that my daughter is going to become an adulteress?"

"What?!" I asked. "What do you mean?"

"Page 3, fifth paragraph down," she said. "Here's what you wrote: 'Adolescence is the confusing corridor that leads from childhood to adultery.'"

"I wrote THAT? Oh, my gosh! I meant adulthood, not adultery."

"Well, yeah, that's what I thought you meant" she said, chuckling. "I just had to call and give you a hard time."

That's as bad as a story I wrote that started with this sentence, hastily typed: "The pubic beach at Lake L'Homme Dieu is going to be sizzling with fun this Friday when it opens for the summer season."

Oops! Proofreader Dorothy Tarrant, usually so eagle-eyed, must have blinked when she missed that boo-boo.

Putting a newspaper together can also be hazardous. Many years ago, I wrote a feature story about Tom Bosek of Alexandria. While putting the paper together for the printing plant, I placed Tom's mug photo onto the story. Next day, Tom's mother, Arlene, whom I knew well, called and said, "Oh boy, has Tom ever changed, so much so I just don't recognize him anymore. Dennis, check today's paper."

I did and almost keeled over. It wasn't Tom. It was a mug shot of somebody else with Tom's name under it. I gasped, I stuttered.

Arlene laughed. "Don't worry, Dennis. We've been having so much fun with that all day long!"

Thank my lucky stars for eagle-eyed (and forgiving) readers.

Have an opinion? Share it: news@thenewsleaders.com