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Schools celebrate 39th anniversary of Earth Day

By **MEGAN K. SCOTT**
AP Associated Press

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NEW YORK - No need to worry about the kids not going green.

Schools across the country are celebrating Earth Day with tree plantings, recycling displays and lessons on energy and water conservation. Some are shutting off the lights for the day, while others are sending kids into the community to spread environmentally friendly messages.

Here's what some schools are doing to mark the 39th anniversary of Earth Day, which is on April 22.

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Montessori Academy of Chicago

It's lights out for Montessori Academy of Chicago. The school with 185 students, from six weeks to 9 years old, is shutting off the lights for the day to teach kids and their parents energy conservation. About 75 students ages 3-6 will also build sculptures with rocks, leaves, and sticks in a nearby park and learn about Midwestern trees from a local arborist.

"The more our students interact with the world around them, the more they can appreciate what the earth has to give us," said Stacey Edwards, educational coordinator.

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The Goddard School for Early Childhood Development, Pond Road location in Freehold, N.J.

About 25 4-year-olds will learn about water pollution when they toss the trash from their lunches into a giant container of water. The students will observe what happens to the water in a few hours. 'What will the fish and frogs think if they are living in this water?' Their teacher will also read them "Our Class is Going Green!" a book written by Oklahoma kindergartners with easy things kids can do to protect the environment.

"We hope they learn that they have to preserve our water, preserve our land for years to come," said director Shelly Berkal.

Chesterbrook Academy in Columbia, S.C

Chesterbrook Academy is holding its 16th annual "Ladybug Release." The 175 pre-K and kindergartners will each receive a handful of ladybugs, recite a poem and then release the insects into the environment. The kids have been learning about ladybugs, which eat aphids — plant lice — and other insects that are harmful to trees, shrubs and plants. The kids will also decorate T-shirts and hats with "Earth Day" messages and will wear them for the big event.

"They learn a lot about ladybugs and the good they bring us, and they learn a lot about taking care of the earth and making it beautiful," said principal Susan Asher.

University Schools, Greeley, Colo.

Students at University Schools will be making music. About 130 third-and fourth graders will create instruments out of things that are ordinarily thrown away, said music teacher Karen Gullickson. She said last year's instruments included a bass fiddle made out of a wash tub, broomstick and string, and drums made out of coffee cans and leather. The students will create the instruments and then perform as a band. Gullickson said she hopes students learn to make music and the importance of reusing and recycling.

South Middle School, Arlington Heights, Ill.

There's nothing like a competition to get students excited. South Middle School plans to announce the winning homeroom in the "Recycle Caps with Aveda" program. Nine-hundred students have been collecting plastic bottle caps, from ketchup bottles to milk gallons. A tree will be planted on school grounds in honor of the winning homeroom, including a plaque, and students will attend a dedication ceremony. Aveda has developed ways to make new caps and containers from recycled caps.

"I'll be honest. I never anticipated the excitement it's brought to the kids," said Principal Linda Klobucher, adding that she saw kids going through the trash at a basketball game recently looking for caps. "They are really having a great time. And the teachers are too."

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The Ursuline School, New Rochelle, N.Y.

The Environmental Awareness Club will be making and selling solar smoothies (blenders will be powered by solar panels). The club is raising money to install solar panels on a Habitat for Humanity house. Members will also participate in a clean up and local planting event. Later in the week, the entire girls' school, grades 6 to 12, will turn the lights out in the classrooms and collect jewelry and bags for a "freecycle" — students can drop off the goods throughout the week and that Friday, take what they want for free. Anything extra will be donated.

"I'm hoping to show how the green movement is also about giving back," said junior Maddy Yozwiak, who is a reporter for the environmental news Web site Mother Nature Network (<http://www.MNN.com>) "Also, if students get in the habit of recycling, that would be a big bonus as well."

Centennial High School, Las Vegas

Battery power is coming to Centennial High School. The 3,000 student campus is participating in a "Battery Swap," bringing in their alkaline batteries and exchanging them for the more eco-friendly Fuji EnviroMAX batteries. Math teacher Mary Macioce contacted Fuji after seeing its batteries at the Consumer Electronics Show. Fuji will give the old batteries to Battery Solutions, a company that recycles all types of batteries.

"I'm hoping that whether they believe there is a global environmental crisis, they will see there is a shared responsibility for doing something to preserve our environment," said Macioce. "Even if it's as simple as recycling batteries."

Oregon High School, Oregon, Wisc.

The EcoCAR is hitting the road to Oregon High School. About 60 students in Anatomy and Physiology of Machines will learn about the car from the engineering students who are designing it.

Students from the University of Wisconsin-Madison are re-engineering a 2009 GM Saturn VUE vehicle to make it more fuel efficient, as part of a North American collegiate competition called EcoCar: The NeXt Challenge, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy and General Motors.

High school technology and engineering teacher Randy Way said he hopes the presentation gets his students thinking about how to address environmental and energy issues when it comes to automobiles.

The University of California, San Diego

"Earth Week" is coming to the 30,000 student campus, with an eco-fashion show, clean car show and student-produced films about the environment — among a host of other programs. Students and staff will dig through more than 1,000 pounds of trash to show how garbage is full of recyclable items.

The school is also encouraging the community to bring in old computers, stereos and cell phones for reuse and recycle. Other events include a Green Job fair, with eco-friendly companies, such as the Center for Sustainable Energy, and a Local Organic Food Fair. Organic meals will be served at the various dining halls throughout the week.

Boston University

There's no lull in "Earth Week" activities on this 30,000 student campus. On the actual day: The Organic Gardening Collective will give away seedlings; the Slow Foods Club will hold a taste-test between organic produce and conventional produce; the Environmental Student Organization will have a taste-off between bottled water and filtered tap water. Student recycling coordinators will distribute free recycling bags. The dining halls will feature "all local menus." Even the School of Theology will have an Earth Day Worship.

Susan Lebovits, communications specialist in the office of sustainability said she hopes "Earth Week" brings an awareness to campus about the importance of reducing the environmental footprint.

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