

Fifty years ago, millions of Americans took to the streets, college campuses, and hundreds of cities to demand basic protections to safeguard our planet for future generations and a healthier future for all of us. That first Earth Day, on April 22, 1970, and the landmark legislation that followed it, changed how we interact with and we view our impact on the natural world. Here in Douglas County, as we look ahead to Earth Day 2020, we call upon our organizations, businesses, and residents to build on the many years we have celebrated this call to action, and reaffirm our commitment to creating a healthy Earth, fighting climate change and protecting our precious lands, air, water, and wildlife for us, for our children, and for generations to come.

In this unprecedented time of uncertainty and sacrifice in our community, we pause to remember and appreciate the caring tradition and collective action of Earth Day. While we cannot gather together as we have traditionally celebrated, we can still commemorate the creativity, hope, and care of our community in protecting the one planet we have.

As such, Lawrence and Douglas County will be hosting a series of community-driven workshops, activities, and resources to lift our spirits, and celebrate our connection to the Earth and one another. Of course, all activities will practice appropriate social distancing, making great use of online tools and resources. Many of the topics will take into account current isolation and focus on opportunities to honor, protect, and enhance our natural resources from our own homes. We will also be highlighting the numerous ways that Earth Day is being observed across our community and how you can participate.

Earth Day offers our community an opportunity to make, renew, and celebrate commitments that will protect quality of life and the Earth for generations to come. We ask you to join us in honoring this intention during this very special Earth Day. As our community recovers from this global crisis, our care for each other must be matched by our care for our natural resources here at home and across the globe. Let us all accept our individual and united responsibilities to reverse climate change and care for the world we live in, ensuring clean air, fresh water, beautiful landscapes, and access to local food, especially in a time when food security and the food economy are at the forefront of our community challenges. Together we can work towards -- and look forward to -- a safer, more stable, and more sustainable world.

- Patrick Kelly, Chair, Douglas County Board of County Commissioners