

EPA: United States Environmental Protection Agency

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Speeches - By EPA Administrator

President's Environmental Youth Awards, The White House, Washington, D.C.

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**Remarks of Governor Christine Todd Whitman,
Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection
Agency,
at the
President's Environmental Youth Awards
The White House
Washington, D.C.**

April 24, 2001

Mr. President: I want to begin by thanking you and Mrs. Bush for hosting this year's President's Environmental Youth Awards. This is the first time in eight years that a President and First Lady have welcomed the award winners to the White House.

Your presence here today reflects your genuine commitment to both America's environment and to America's young people, and I know I speak for everyone here in thanking you for extending this very special honor to us.

Of course, an even better indication of the importance the President places on environmental protection can be

found in this Administration's record. It's not quite 100 days since President Bush took office. In that brief time, the President has shown that he will leave America's air cleaner, water purer, and land better protected at the end of his Administration than it was when he took office.

Things have been happening so quickly, I think it's worth reviewing some of the environmental highlights of the President's first 100 days.

The President is making the air cleaner by requiring diesel buses and trucks to cleanup their emissions and use cleaner burning fuel. This will literally save lives – more than 8,300 a year. It will also help hundreds of thousands of kids with asthma breathe easier.

The President is protecting America's families from exposure to lead by significantly increasing the reporting requirements of companies that use lead in their business. This should result in decreases in the use of lead in various industrial applications, further safeguarding our children from the dangerous effects of lead poisoning.

The President is adding new levels of protection to America's precious wetlands by more closely regulating construction activities in wetland areas. This will ensure that America preserves its wetlands, areas that are so important to a healthy environment.

The President's budget devotes record levels of resources to protecting our environment. He has, for example, provided more money than ever before for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and more than ever before for grants to states and tribes to support their environmental programs. To make up for years of neglect, the President's budget devotes \$4.9 billion over the next five years for America's majestic national parks. Since the first Earth Day 31 years ago, we have made enormous strides in cleaning up our environment and preventing additional pollution – and the progress

continues. Throughout America, state and local governments, forward-thinking businesses, energetic environmental groups, and spirited individuals are in the forefront of some of the most creative, innovative, and effective efforts to improve the condition of the environment in their communities. In partnership with the federal government, these efforts will bring us the next generation of environmental improvement

Over the past hundred days I have spent quite a bit of time traveling around the country, following the President's example. It might interest you to know that the President has spent more time out with the American people in his first hundred days than any other president in history. I haven't been able to match his pace – but of course, I don't have my own airplane, either.

In my travels outside Washington, I have been enormously encouraged by the deep commitment the American people have to our environment and the way in which they take a sense of personal responsibility for protecting it.

It's that commitment that is so well represented here by this year's winners of the President's Environmental Youth Awards. Our honorees today exemplify the best of the American spirit – a spirit that embraces challenge and matches it with ingenuity, energy, and enthusiasm.

President and Mrs. Bush, I would like to take just a few moments to tell you about the very special young people we have with us today.

From Wellesley, Massachusetts, we have students from Mrs. Marazzo's combined first and second grade class. Their commitment to cleaning up their school's playground led them to establish the Bates School TRASH CLUB. This club, involving students from the entire school, has done an amazing amount of work to cleanup and beautify their school. The founders of the

club, Faith Richardson, Nellie Stoeckle, and Caroline Batten, are real role models for both their fellow students and the adults in their community and around America.

From Cherry Hill, New Jersey, Lewis E. Gorman IV joins us today. Lewis developed a battery recycling program for his community that has resulted in the collection of more than 3,500 used batteries throughout Camden County. Using a variety of creative ideas to promote his project, Lewis built partnerships among the county government, his church, his township, and his neighbors. His efforts show what a profound difference one dedicated person can make.

Bryce W. Galen of Oak Ridge, Tennessee is another inspiring example of American youth. Bryce thought his community needed a living outdoor classroom to teach kids about the environment. Under his leadership and direction, his Boy Scout troop created the Big Turtle Green Way Nature Trail. The trail, located in a city park, passes near a river, past a beaver dam, and through a wetland environment. Our appreciation for his efforts is certainly shared by the hundreds of hikers who enjoy the trail Bryce helped create.

Our next honorees come from Lincolnshire, Illinois. Andrew Klaber and Lauren Goldberg were juniors at Stevenson High in 1997 when their school disbanded its paper recycling program because market conditions didn't support it. Andrew and Lauren were concerned about the effects of this decision on the environment and they did something about it. They did extensive research, preparing a report that recommended actions their school could take to improve the market for recycled paper products. As a result of their efforts, Stevenson High is now a model of how minor changes in existing operations can provide major environmental benefits.

Next, we are joined by Barbara Brown, Kate Klinkerman, and Lacy Jones – three Texans you don't want to mess with if you're not concerned about the

environment. In 1997, they found out that used oil was being poured along fence posts to kill weeds, contaminating ground water for miles around. To stop this practice, they established "Don't Be Crude," the first crude oil recycling project in America started and run by young people. As a result of their efforts, 20,000 gallons of oil that would have gone into the ground have been recycled.

A science lesson on endangered species inspired the students in Ms. Linda Scheurmann's fourth grade class at Roland-Story Elementary in Story City, Iowa to take action to help save threatened wildlife. Over the past ten years, her students have done some amazing things. They have raised nearly \$40,000 to help endangered animals. They've adopted a wetlands area five miles outside of town, built wood duck boxes, and worked with to restore Iowa's swan population. Lynden and Madyson Dally are here to represent Ms. Scheurmann's class. Their efforts show just what a difference good teachers make to America's children.

Joining us from Hyrum, Utah are Derek Jacobson, Melanie Maughan, Mary Austin, and Ashlee Gardner, students from South Cache 8-9 Community Center. These young people were concerned about declining numbers of certain species in their community, including pheasants, and fathead minnows. They were also concerned about protecting aquatic habitats from the dumping of toxins into storm drains. Through a variety of creative efforts, they are helping to protect both habitat and diminishing wildlife in their community.

Our next honorees are the KMAC Kids – Kids Making A Connection – sixth graders from Chico, California, represented by Mary Bayham. The KMAC kids were studying the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning and wanted to share their new found knowledge with others. Putting their creative talents together, they wrote a storybook called, "What Could It Be, Beverly?" This

book, and an accompanying video, are helping thousands of kids learn about the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Our final award winners have come a long way to be here today, all the way from Soldatna, Alaska. Michael Penland, Eric Soderquist, and Paul Kim are three young men whose commitment to protecting the natural habitat of aquatic life in Soldatna Creek Park inspired them to raise more than \$15,000 to construct a fish habitat restoration and protection habitat at the park. Their project has reduced the effect of public use on the surrounding habitat while increasing its accessibility to the public – a real win-win solution.

Mr. President, Mrs. Bush: these young people represent the best of America and our best hope for the future. They saw an environmental challenge and they did something about it. They worked hard, used creative methods, and built partnerships with those who could help them accomplish their goals. They didn't do this for recognition, they did it to get results – and they certainly have.

This year's President's Environmental Youth Award winners – and all those who worked with them – prove the wisdom behind the President's faith in our ability to work together, as Americans, to meet the environmental challenges of the 21st century. He knows that when the federal government unleashes the power of our people, there's no end to the things our country can accomplish. Our winners' efforts, energy, and enthusiasm are matched in full measure by the President's commitment to the health of our environment. Together, we will reach our goal of making America's air cleaner, water purer, and land better protected in the years ahead.

Thank you.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, it is my great honor to

present to you the President of the United States.

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