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4-14-2022

### Gardner-Webb Creation Care Group Sponsors Events to Celebrate Earth Day

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#### Recommended Citation

Office of University Communications, "Gardner-Webb Creation Care Group Sponsors Events to Celebrate Earth Day" (2022). *Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive*. 2447.  
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**CAMPUS NEWS**

# Gardner-Webb Creation Care Group Sponsors Events to Celebrate Earth Day

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON APRIL 14, 2022



▲ For Earth Day in 2019, students learned about honeybees and plants that attract bees.

## Topics Include Caring for God's Creation, Recycling and Sustainability

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb University celebrates Creation Care/Earth Week, April 19-22, with a series of programs to highlight recycling and sustainability practices to preserve the integrity, beauty and health of God's creation. Guest speakers include GWU faculty and top environmentalists from the region and the nation. The activities are sponsored by the Creation Care Advisory Group and are open to the public.

Dr. David Judge, professor of biology, said the Creation Care Advisory Group was initiated on campus in 2015. He emphasized that the focus of Creation Care is sustainability, which he defines as “the wise use of the Earth's resources for humanity for generations to come while trying to maintain healthy ecosystems and mitigating pollution.”

Each year, faculty, staff and students are asked to serve on the group. Goals include examining University purchasing and policies to look for ways to increase socially-responsible and Creation Care-friendly practices; empowering operations and facilities staff to implement best practices for recycling and energy conservation; and emphasizing energy efficiency in all aspects of facility plans and upgrades.



▲ Dr. Jim McConnell

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The following events are planned:

- Tuesday, April 19, at 9:25 a.m. in Tucker Student Center's Stewart Hall – Dr. Jim McConnell, Associate Dean, and Professor of New Testament Interpretation, School of Divinity will offer a Dimensions program: “Restoring Shalom: Caring for God’s Creation.”
- Wednesday, April 20, at 6:30 p.m. in Stewart Hall – Jeff Smithberger, director of Solid Waste in Mecklenburg County, N.C., will present “Recycling and Sustainability in Mecklenburg County – What is it Like for a Jurisdiction of One Million People?” He has over 38 years of experience in management and leadership of complex solid waste management systems. He previously worked as the director of Solid Waste in Fairfax County, Virginia, where he retired from in 2011 after 28 years of service. Smithberger is well versed in working with residential and commercial waste systems. He helps unravel the mistaken concepts of recycling while encouraging community efforts to recycle correctly. He has both an engineering and business background from Virginia Tech.



▲ Jeff Smithberger

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- Thursday, April 21, at 7 p.m. in Stewart Hall – Panel Discussion, co-sponsored by LOTS (Life of the Scholar). Topic: “Higher Education and the Environment: Building Sustainable Practices.” The moderator is Dr. Ben Leslie, professor, Christian Theology, Gardner-Webb. The panelists are:
  - Dr. Wes Dripps, the Director of Sustainability at Amherst College in Massachusetts. Previously, he spent 17 years as a professor of Earth, Environmental, and Sustainability sciences at Furman University in Greenville, S.C., where he chaired the EES department and also served as the Executive Director of the Shi Institute for Sustainable Communities. At Amherst, Dripps is responsible for creating and supporting opportunities for faculty and students to engage in teaching and scholarship focused on sustainable communities; building collaborative relationships that enhance teaching and experiential learning; engaging the campus community in sustainability initiatives to inform strategic planning, management of resources, and operations and facilities planning and design; and helping Amherst move toward carbon neutrality.
  - Dr. Arielle McKee, assistant professor of English, Gardner-Webb. While McKee’s primary research examines fairy disruptions in medieval literature, she has, from a young age, been invested in environmental care and activism—a fact for which Captain Planet is at least partially to blame. McKee has published ecocritical work on the Lorax movie and on the treatment of the natural world in several Arthurian texts.
  - Dr. John Wear, founder and executive director of the Center for the Environment and associate professor of biology and environmental science at Catawba College in Salisbury, N.C., has been involved in a diverse array of environmental efforts for over a quarter of a century that have spanned a very broad range of environmental and sustainability-focused areas. He has received several awards, including being named Conservationist of the Year by the Governor’s Conservation Achievement Awards Program, and “Guardian of the Earth” by the Charlotte Observer. During his time as director of the Center for the Environment, Wear has been the driving force behind a wide variety of regional initiatives, including campaigns to improve air quality and water quality, land conservation efforts, programing to educate government, community, and business leaders, a statewide program to certify schools for their efforts in shifting towards sustainability at all levels and a national environmental summit for high school students among just a few. Wear’s efforts to focus at the community level, engaging students in those efforts while educating the region and beyond, have brought the Center for the Environment into the national spotlight. Julian Keniry, author and co-creator of the National Wildlife Foundation’s Campus Ecology Program, recently said the Center was “incomparable,” and concluded, “With leadership from John Wear and his team, the Center for the Environment at Catawba College has set many local and national precedents.”
- Friday, April 22, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in front of Tucker Student Center (in lobby area if bad weather) – Earth Day Fair with Foothills Farmers Market and other displays.



- ▲ From left, Dr. John Wear, Dr. Arielle McKee and Dr. Wes Dripps are the panel members for the discussion on Thursday, April 21, on “Higher Education and the Environment: Building Sustainable Practices.”
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***Auxiliary aids will be made available to persons with disabilities upon request 10 working days prior to the event. Please call 704-406-4270 or email [disabilityservices@gardner-webb.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@gardner-webb.edu) with your request.***

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