

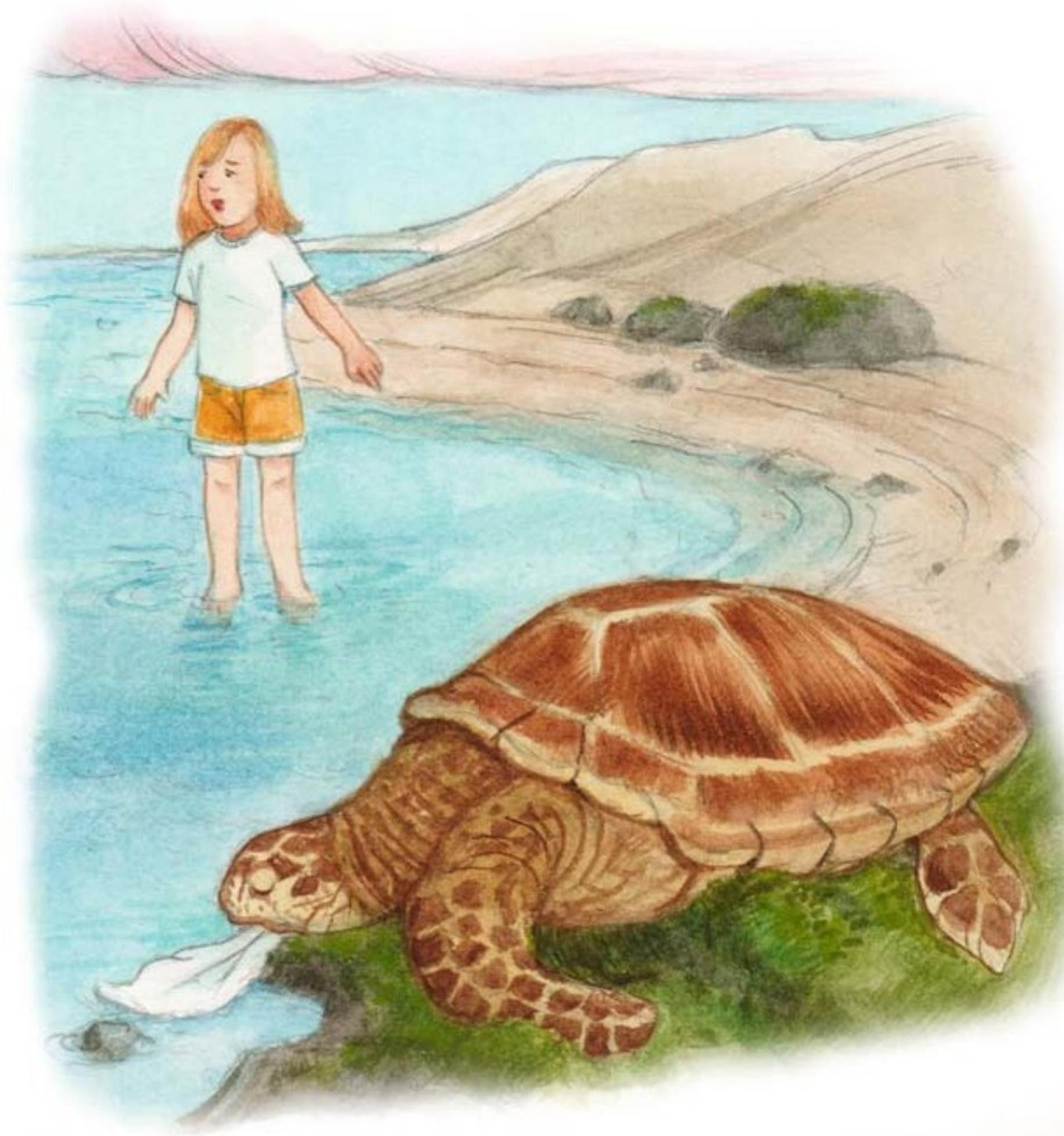
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# My Earth Day Birthday

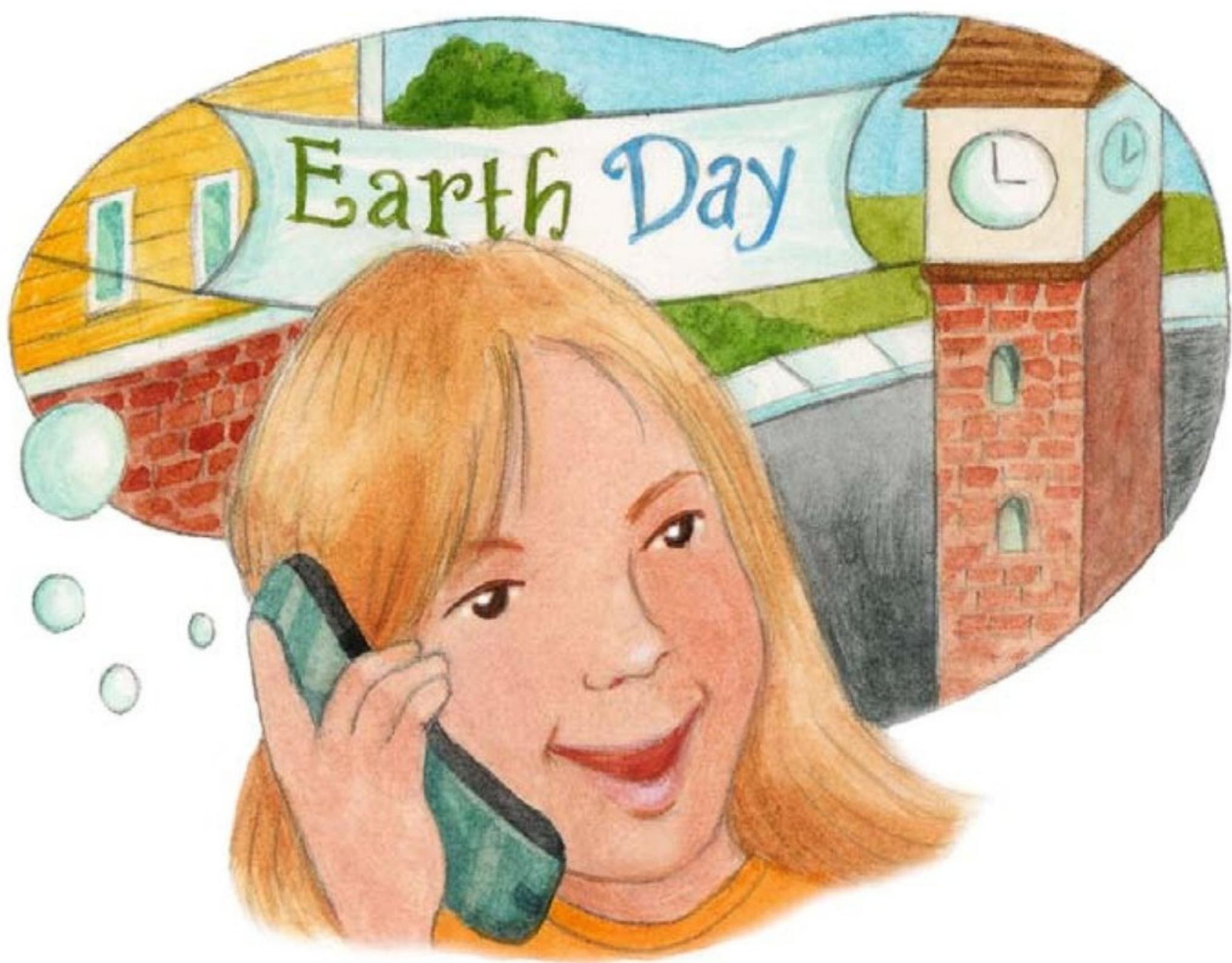


Written by Rose Brooker • Illustrated by Kathie Kelleher

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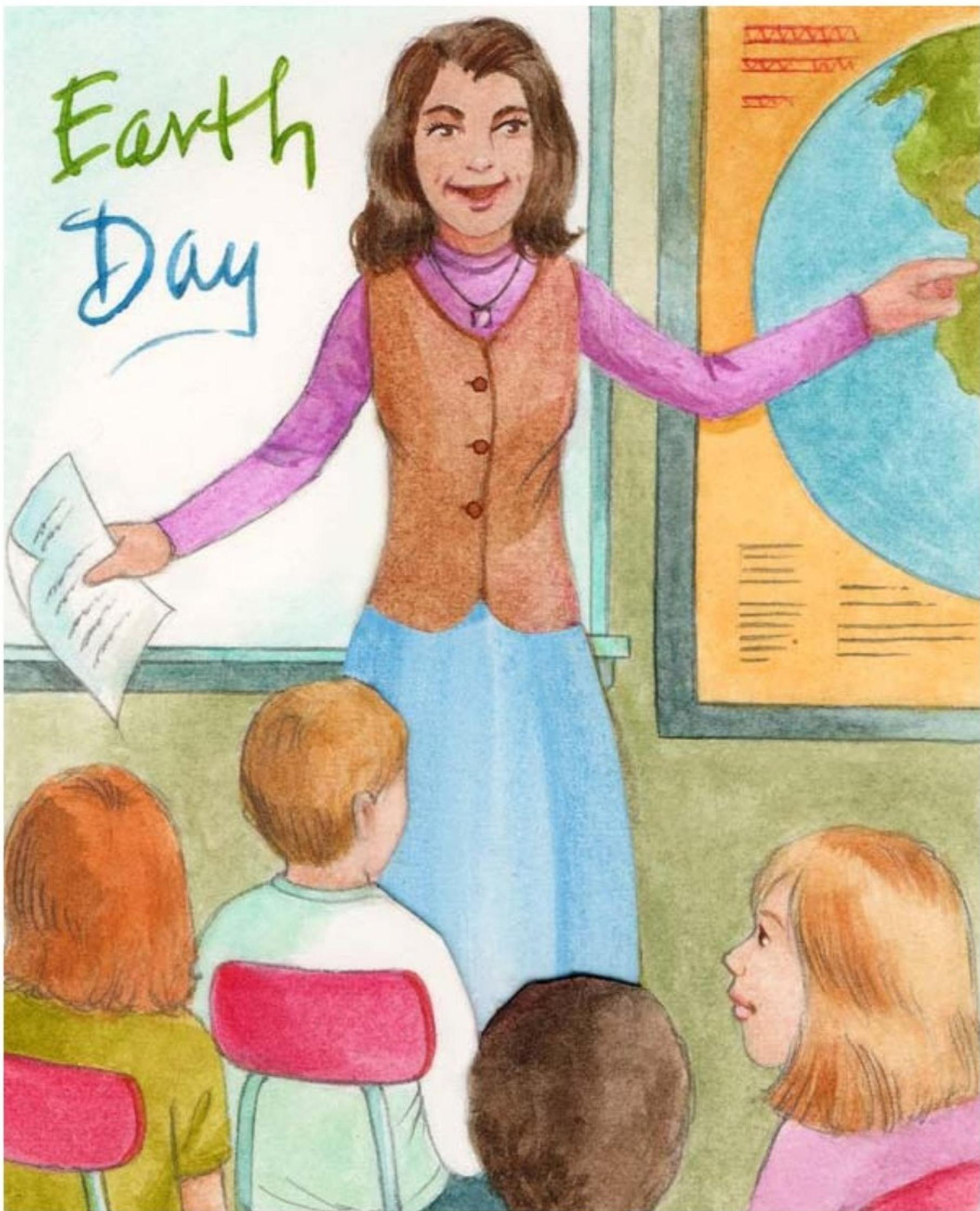
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## Tara's Story

My name is Tara, and this year I had the best birthday EVER! My birthday is on April 22—Earth Day. I call it my “Earth Day birthday.” Every year, I do something special on my birthday to help the **environment**. Last year my mom and I helped clean up a beach. I had a great time and learned a lot about ocean animals. But this year’s celebration was even better!



Back in January, my teacher, Ms. Gonzales, told our class that the school would hold a special Earth Day celebration this year. Each class had a project, and Ms. Gonzales volunteered our class to organize a **fair** for the school. Because of my birthday, my classmates put me in charge of the whole thing!



I wasn't always interested in the environment. But two years ago, my family went on a vacation to Mexico. We went for a walk on the beach and saw a dead sea turtle that had choked on a plastic grocery bag. I was shocked to see how something as simple as a grocery bag could kill a wild animal. I felt sad that the sea turtle's life was wasted. That day, I decided I would find a way to help the environment.

## Organizing the Fair

After Ms. Gonzales told us about our class project, we had a **brainstorming** meeting. Some kids came up with ideas right away. Other kids needed help, so I gave them a few ideas, like:

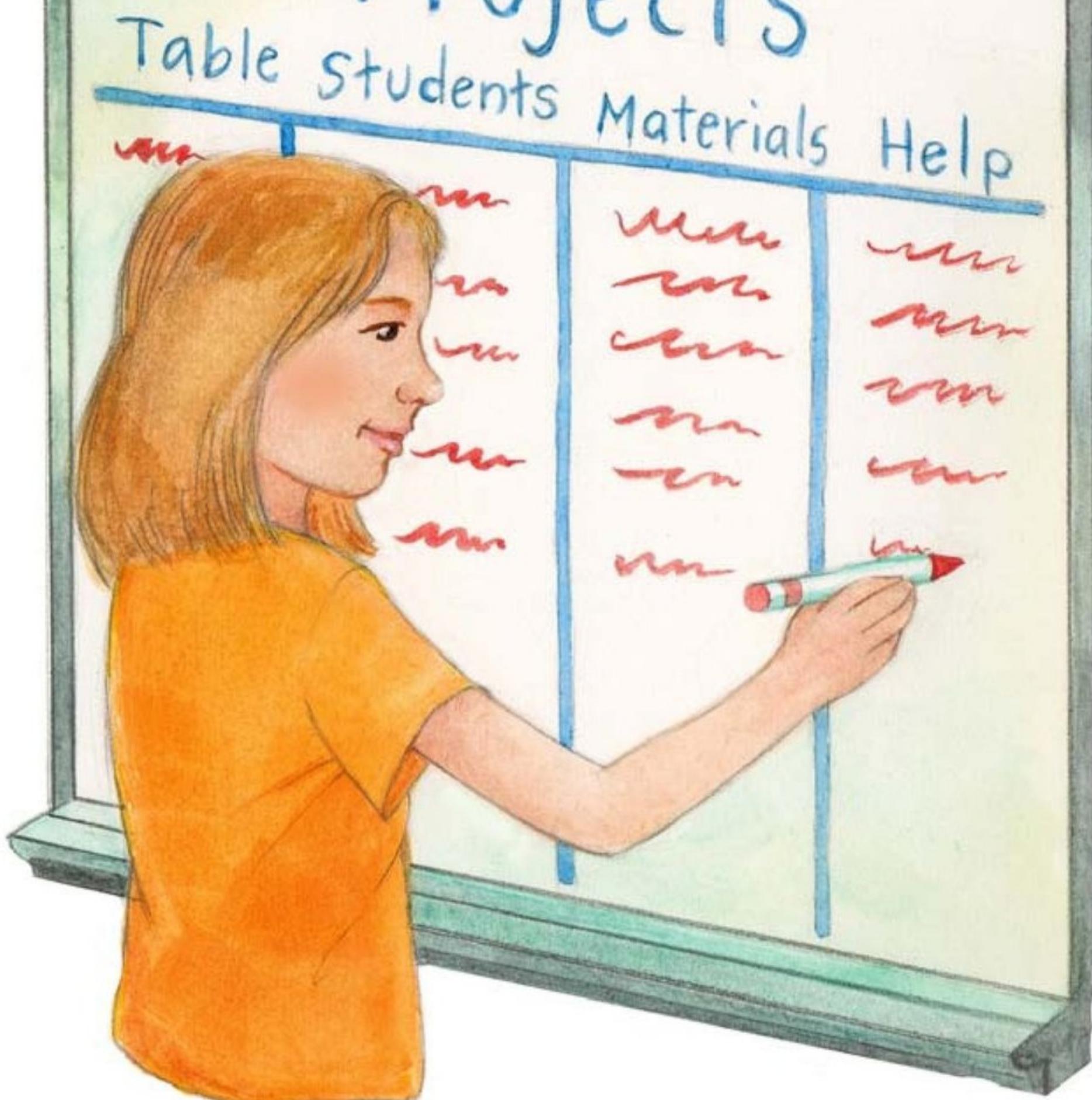
- Teaching people about **recycling** at home
- Selling **reusable** bags to cut down on waste
- Selling things made from **renewable** materials such as bamboo
- Putting on a skit about something happening to the environment

By the end of our meeting, we had a great plan. We were all really excited about the fair.

One of my jobs was to keep a chart of everyone's ideas. Ms. Gonzales put up a whiteboard in the classroom. I listed each idea on the board. I also wrote down who would work on it and what materials and help they'd need.

I checked in with my classmates over the next few months to see if they needed help. There was a lot to do, but working together made it fun.

# Earth Day Fair Projects



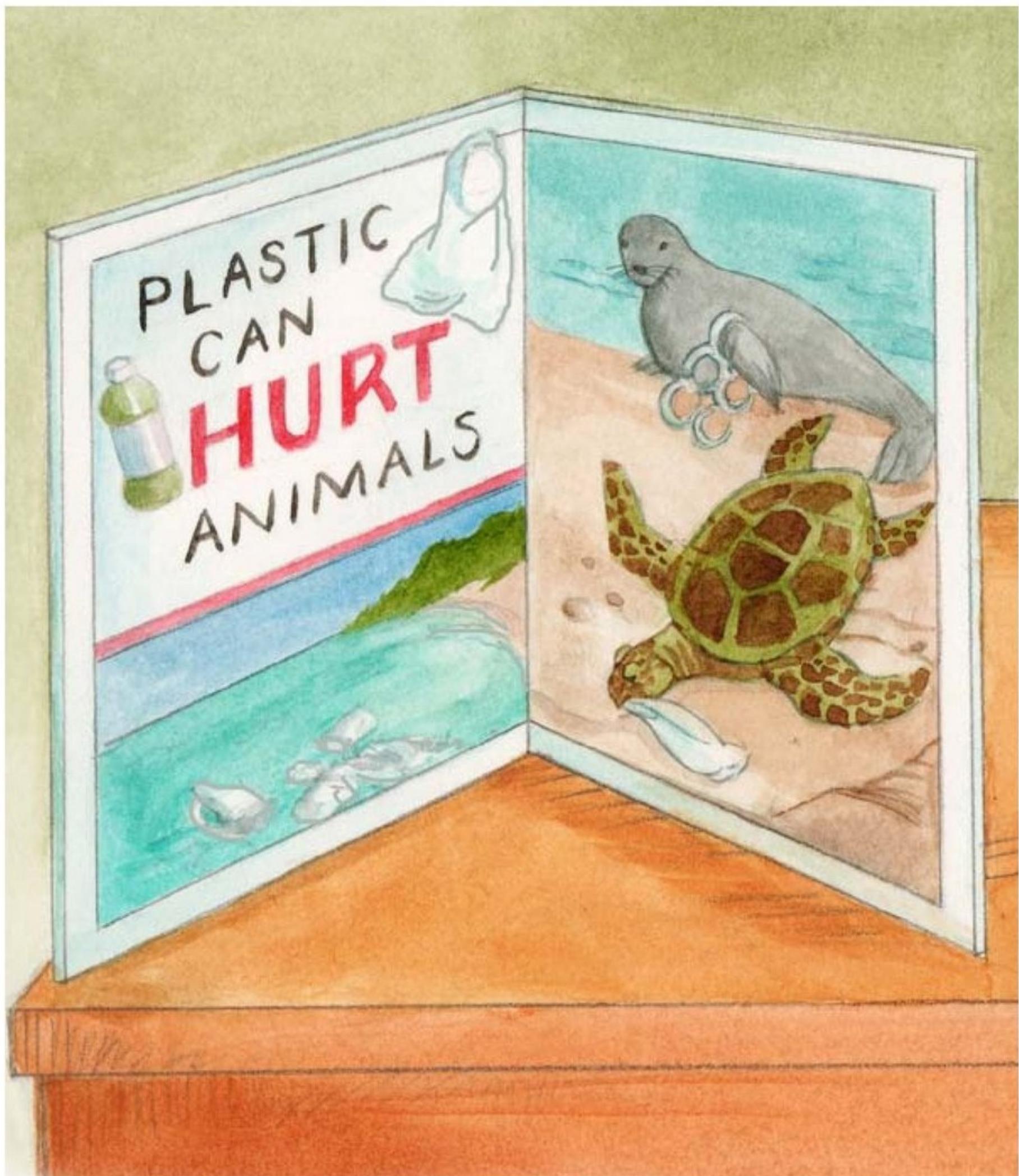
Sometimes family members even helped us with our projects. We were surprised at how fast the time flew. Before we knew it, Earth Day had arrived!



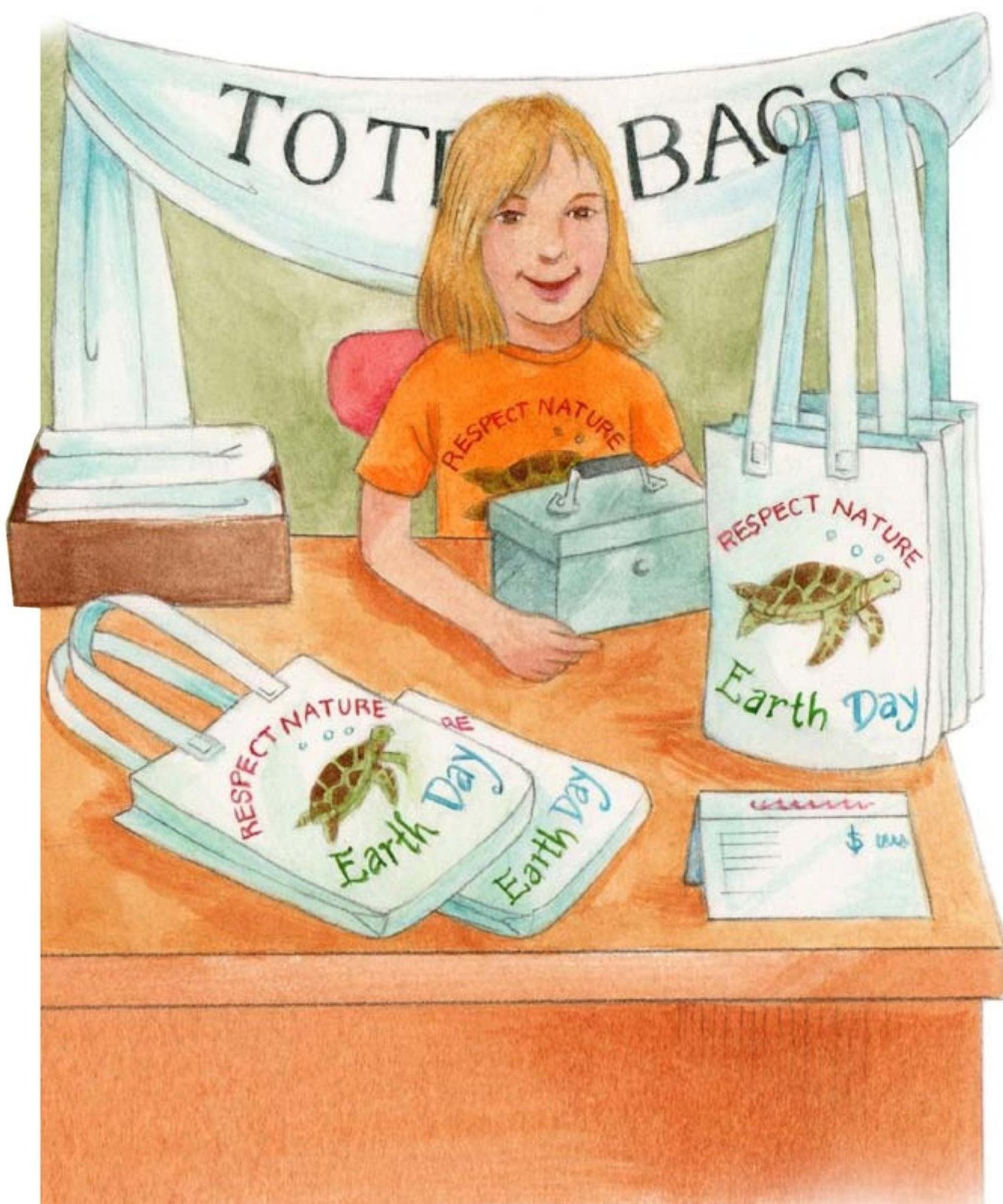
## The Fair

The weather was perfect for the fair. A bunch of parents helped us set up tables early in the morning. We wanted to be ready by 10:00 a.m., when the fair started.

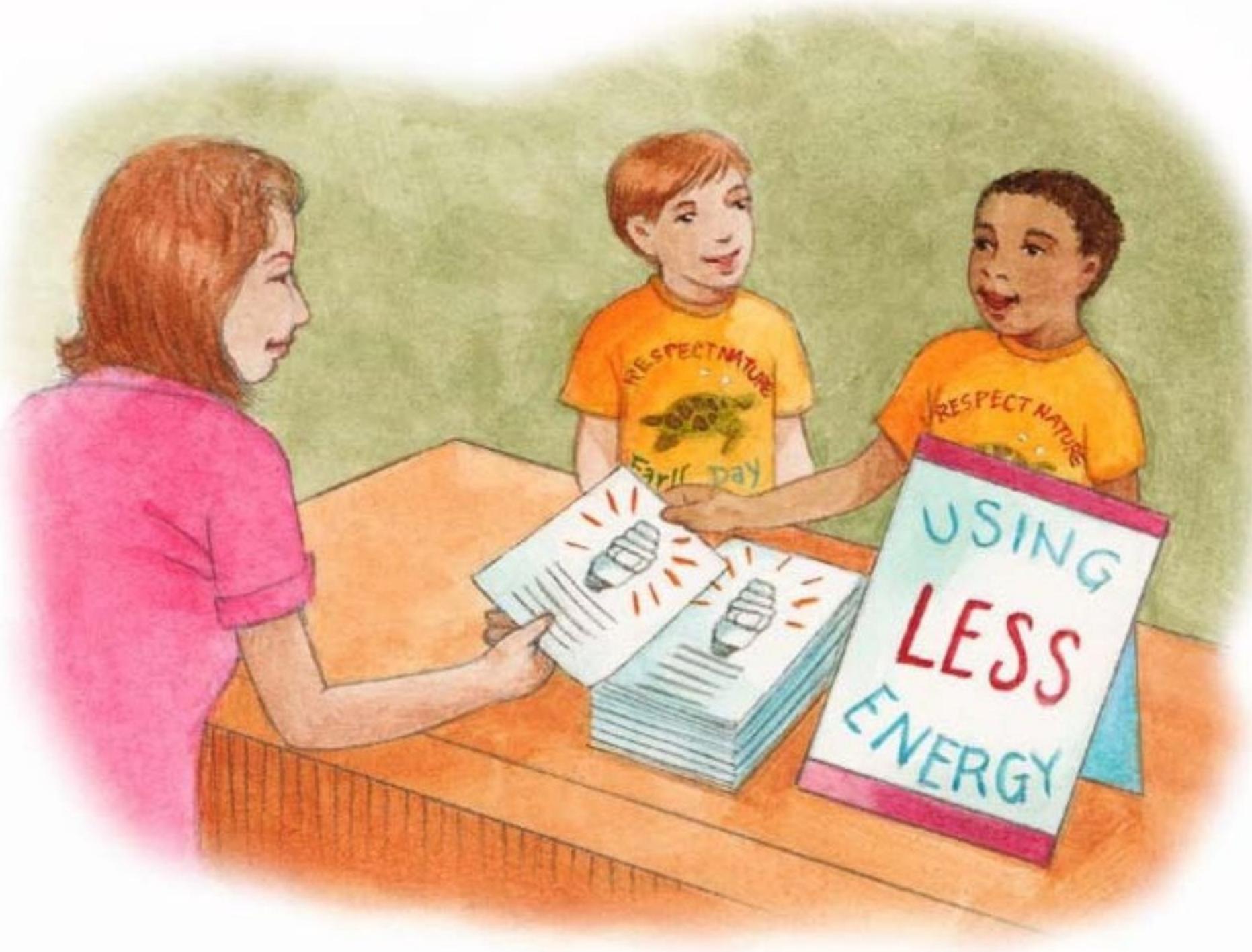
Ms. Gonzales surprised us by handing out matching T-shirts to everyone in the class. I almost cried when I saw them. They had a beautiful sea turtle with the words “Respect Nature” and “Earth Day.” The design was Ms. Gonzales’s birthday present to me. She knew about the trip to Mexico that had changed my life.



I wanted to teach people how plastic trash can cause problems for **marine wildlife**. I had heard that there were huge areas of plastic trash in the Pacific Ocean. Plastic trash can hurt or kill ocean animals that accidentally eat it or get trapped in it. I made a poster with pictures of plastic trash and some ways it can harm marine animals.



Ms. Gonzales had her sea turtle design printed on cloth bags. I sold the bags to people who stopped by my table. I was happy to teach people why reusable cloth bags are better for the environment than plastic bags.



Bernard and Jake made a flyer about ways people can use less **resources**. Many things on their list are easy for kids to do, and they all make a difference. Here are a few of their ideas:

- Turn off your computer or put it to sleep when you're not using it.
- Turn off lights when you leave a room.
- Turn off the faucet while you brush your teeth.
- Open shades and curtains on cold days so sunlight can heat rooms.
- Tell an adult if you notice a leaky faucet so it can get fixed.



Anwar and Yoshie set up a table to tell people about the community garden. Our town set aside some land for the garden last year so that people could grow their own vegetables. It's a great way to bring people together and do something for the environment.

The community garden hasn't become very popular yet. Anwar and Yoshie brought pictures of baskets of vegetables that their families grew last year. They also handed out **brochures** about signing up to use the garden.

Angie wants to be a newspaper reporter someday. She wrote an article about how Earth Day began. She also listed some ways that people in other countries celebrate it. It's great to think of all the people around the world working together to take better care of our planet.

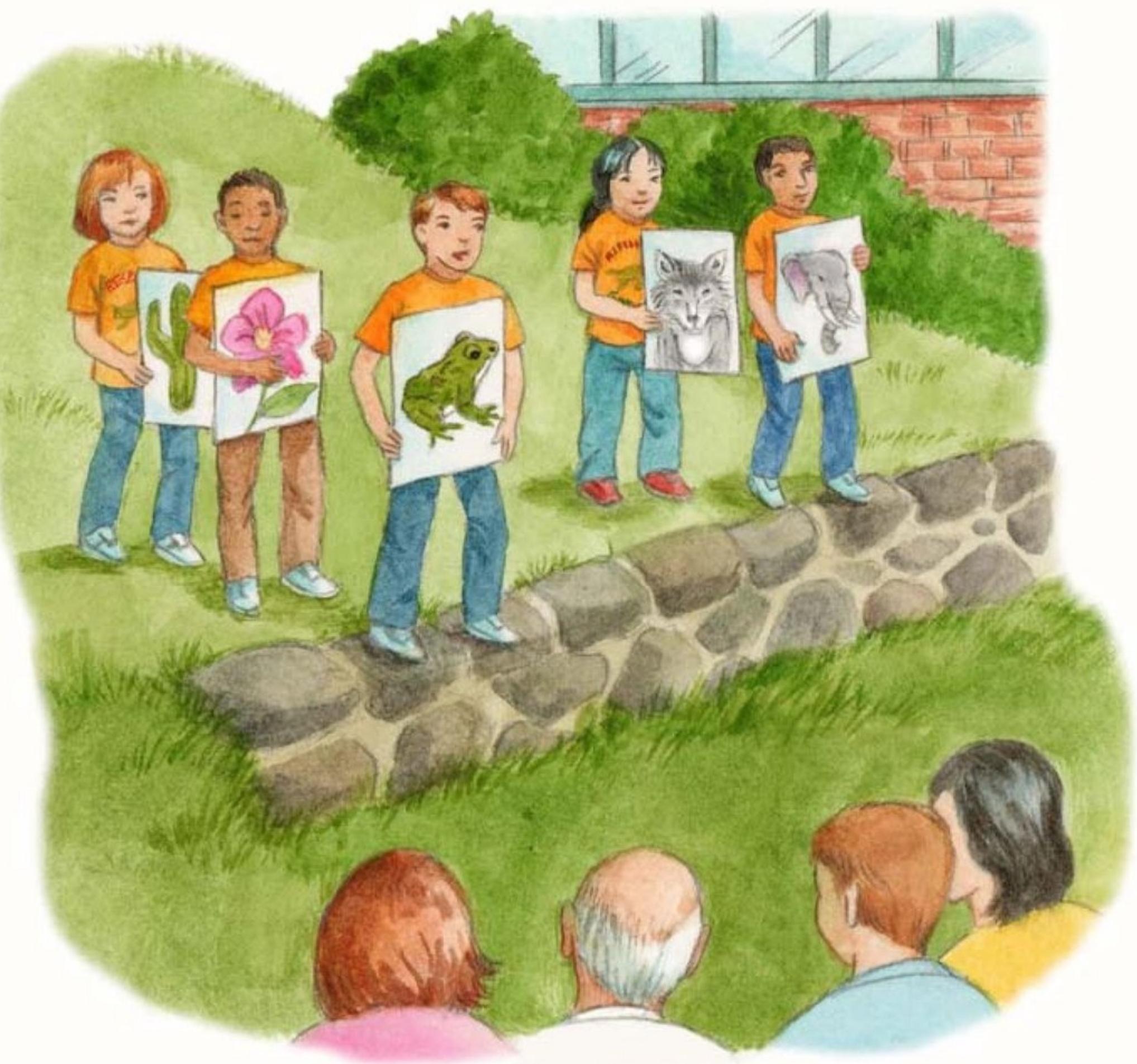
## How Earth Day Began

Gaylord Nelson was a U.S. senator from Wisconsin. He came up with the idea for Earth Day in the late 1960s. He shared his idea with mayors, governors, newspapers, and magazines. In late 1969, he announced an event the next spring to teach people about caring for the environment. People all across the United States wanted to be part of it. The first Earth Day, in 1970, was a huge success. About 20 million people were involved, including ten thousand schools, two thousand colleges, and one thousand different communities. People all around the world now celebrate Earth Day.





Ashley and Adam's mom works for the city parks. She told them about a nature area just outside of town with a lot of litter in it. They offered to help clean up the area so people can walk and have picnics there. Their mom chose a weekend in July for a big cleanup. Ashley and Adam made a poster about the event and signed up people who wanted to help. It'll be a fun community project ending with a barbecue for everyone who helps.



One of the big hits of the fair was a presentation put on by five kids called a Council of All Beings. They took turns speaking for different living things on Earth, like frogs, wolves, elephants, cactuses, and flowers. The kids talked about how **pollution** and **climate change** are hurting each of the living things. They asked people to learn how to help other living things instead of hurting them.

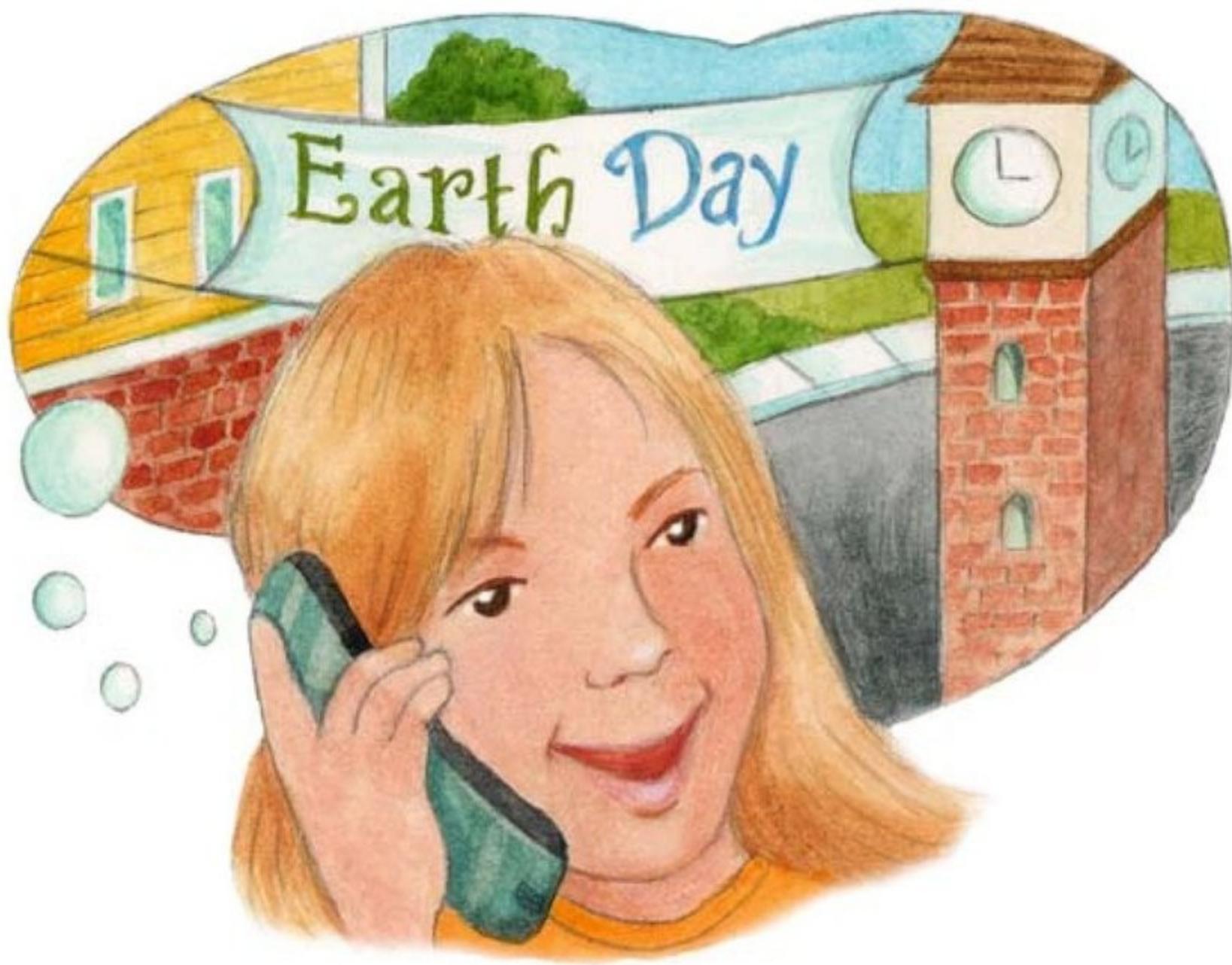


## On the News

When our class planned the Earth Day fair, we knew that kids from our school and their families would come. We had no idea that our whole town and other towns nearby would hear about it. But during the fair, a news van pulled up with a television reporter and a camera person!



Ms. Gonzales talked with the reporter and then called me over and introduced us. She told him that I had helped to organize the fair. The reporter asked how I had become involved in environmental activities. I told him how seeing the dead sea turtle in Mexico made me want to do something to make a difference. He said he thought our Earth Day fair was a big success.



## Next Year's Earth Day

I was really excited about being on television. But I was even more excited when I got a phone call that night from our town's mayor. After seeing the news story about the fair, she decided to hold an Earth Day celebration for the whole town next year. She wants to include special activities for kids, and she asked me to work with her!

I'm so happy that I found a way to help the environment. And I'm glad that I had a chance to get more people involved. Maybe the life of that sea turtle I saw in Mexico wasn't a waste after all.

## Glossary

<b>brainstorming</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the sharing and development of ideas as a group (p. 7)
<b>brochures</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	brief, printed pieces of advertising, either folded or stapled, with messages that promote a product or service (p. 13)
<b>climate change</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	long-term, lasting changes in Earth's weather patterns or the weather patterns of a region (p. 16)
<b>environment</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the natural world (p. 4)
<b>fair</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a public event for trade, entertainment, or education (p. 5)
<b>marine</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	of or relating to the sea (p. 10)
<b>pollution</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	harmful substances in the air, water, or soil (p. 16)
<b>recycling</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the collecting of certain types of waste to be used over again (p. 7)
<b>renewable</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	able to be replaced and not permanently used up (p. 7)
<b>resources</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	supplies of something valuable or very useful (p. 12)
<b>reusable</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	able to be used more than one time (p. 7)
<b>wildlife</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	wild animals that live in their natural habitats (p. 10)

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