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Westminster community works together at Emigration Creek during Earth Day Clean-up



By [Vanessa Eveleth](#) on April 29, 2022



Westminster College students and staff drop off buckets and bags full of trash they collected during Earth Day Clean-up April 20 by Emigration Creek, on the Westminster College campus. "I think it's really powerful to get students and community members involved in going out and seeing, like, the creek," said junior environmental studies major and community engagement co-lead for the Dumke Center Mariah Trujillo. "A lot of students don't ever go down to the creek and when they go down there [they say] 'Oh, shit, it's actually really polluted down here.'" Photo courtesy of Vanessa Eveleth. Image description: A group of 15 people drop off blue and yellow buckets and bags full of trash that they collected during the Earth Day Clean-up April 20 by Emigration Creek, on

Westminster College campus. In the foreground is black pavement and tall, green grass. A triangular roof of a gray building appears in the background.

The Dumke Center for Civic Engagement and the Environmental Center jointly organized a Earth Day clean-up project, which provided 15–20 students with buckets, gloves and bags as they picked up trash last Wednesday around Emigration Creek at Westminster College.

The Dumke Center handles service opportunities on campus and has wanted to organize an Earth Day project for a couple years, according to Mariah Trujillo, community engagement co-lead for the Dumke Center and junior environmental studies major.

“We really wanted to do, like, a collaborative service opportunity on campus that people could get out and [...] directly benefit the campus and the community,” Trujillo said.

The Environmental Center strives to engage with Westminster community members concerning environmental projects and events, however the center is not service project-oriented, according to sophomore environmental studies major and Organic Garden coordinator for the Environmental Center Lexi Leith.



Junior computer science major Cassidy Orr jumps to the side of Emigration Creek in pursuit of trash at Earth Day Clean-up April 20, on Westminster College campus. Senior nursing major Rebecca Wheeler and sophomore neuroscience major Caroline Boyden stand on the creek’s bank and watch Orr as she makes the jump. “I came to clean up campus with my friends,” Orr said. “I love it here. I want to respect where I’m at every day.” Photo courtesy of Vanessa Eveleth. Image description: A white female student leaps from the a rock in the middle of Emigration Creek to the creek’s side while holding a plastic trash bag in a gloved hand at Earth Day Clean-up April 20, on Westminster College campus. Two other female students stand on the side and watch as the students leaps over the creek.

“It felt like a perfect opportunity for department overlap [the Dumke Center and Environmental Center], especially because we’ve already worked so closely together through other projects,” Leith said.

Trujillo said many students might not go down to Emigration Creek frequently, nor realize the area is polluted from people leaving trash – an event like Earth Day clean-up helps spread the word, according to Trujillo.

“I think that the value of these kinds of events is to get people to care about what happens at Westminster,” Trujillo said. “It can’t just be the same 20 students doing all the engagement work. [...] This really is a campus where a lot of people can be involved and that’s a really good thing about going to Westminster.”

Getting involved with a clean-up day is an easy and comfortable way for service-oriented community engagement, according to Leith.

Cassidy Orr, a junior computer science major, said she wanted to help clean the campus with her friends.



Sophomore geology major Elaina Pierce and first-year nursing major Amy Van Gelder stand by Emigration Creek and pick up trash at Earth Day Clean-up April 20 on Westminster College’s campus. “It’s a nice day,” Pierce said. “And we need community service hours for soccer, so there’s no better way to do that than helping our own campus community.” Photo courtesy of Vanessa Eveleth. Image description: Two white female students stand and kneel next to Emigration Creek during the Earth Day Clean-up April 20 on Westminster College campus. The kneeling student wears a white t-shirt and the standing student has a yellow shirt and carries a blue bucket partially filled with trash.

“It’s a good thing to keep our campus pretty clean,” Orr said. “I love it here. I want to respect where I’m at every day.”

“Any event that encourages students to come in any way and learn more about environmental issues or different ways to get involved through service projects or through Dumke is great,” Leith said.

Sophomore geology major Elaina Pierce said she joined the Earth Day Clean-up because there’s no better way to put in service hours than to help her own campus community.

“Understanding the impact that a small action could have, you’re not going to solve all the world’s environmental problems,” Leith said. “But it does make an impact and it can just make the space feel more whole.”