

A Day To Clean the Earth
By TERRY ELLIS
Contributing Editor

The Brandywine River in Pennsylvania owes its fame to Andrew Wyeth, probably America's best-loved contemporary artist. Wyeth was born near the river in 1917 and has painted the place and its peoples for more than 50 years. Today the Brandywine's stark beauty is cluttered by human garbage and poisoned by fertilizers and pesticides that run off farmland, urban lawns and pavement.

So students from nearby West Chester University celebrated Earth Day by canoeing on the Brandywine, and cleaning up garbage. By noon, the canoes already were too full of junk to go any farther. Bathtubs. Shopping carts. Dishwashers. Refrigerators. Furniture. Tires.

"You would have needed a floating barge to handle all of the stuff we saw," said Craig Stevens, faculty advisor for the clean-up. "And we didn't pick up a lot of it because we would have disturbed the benthic organisms too much. It was better just to leave it."

Stevens is a professor in the Department of Kinesiology (the study of human muscular movement) and serves as an advisor to the Wellness Alliance, a campus group aimed at helping students, faculty, staff and the surrounding community achieve better wellness.

"I live and canoe on the Brandywine with my students and family," he said. "Water is not only a force of nature, it's integral to our own health. To me, being on the water has a very soothing effect. I can get on the water and all my worries go away. But what we saw Saturday on the Brandywine was tragic."

And perhaps a fitting subject for Wyeth. He saw the tragedy and brutality of life reflected in the environment of people he cared for, and he chose to create something beautiful out of it.

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