

Welcome to AMERICAN MOSAIC in VOA Special English.

I’m June Simms.

Today we some hit music from Kacey Musgraves album “Same Trailer Different Park.”

And we also answer a question from China about the American flag.

But first we visit a school near Washington, where students try to observe Earth Day every day.

### **Earth Days At Maryland School**

The world celebrates every year on April 22. But one school in Potomac, Maryland tries to honor Earth Day, every day. Very young children are learning about the environment and taking action to show their love for the Earth. Karen Leggett has our story.

A child’s world is the world of playing.

They love being outside in the open air, chasing each other, sliding and swinging on playground equipment.

But children at St. James Children’s School also add to that fun by observing worms and picking up trash in the school yard. Inside, they learn to save water and electricity. They also recycle and reuse. And every spring they get

the soil ready to plant flowers and vegetables in the school garden.

Cereal boxes are reused to make house fences at St. James school in Potomac, Maryland

The children at St. James range from six weeks to six years old. The environmental study begins at age two.

Rebecca Boker teaches the children the importance of taking care of the Earth.

"If children learn it early on when they are younger it will become part of their daily lives. Not something they have to think twice about. It should be something that everyone does. That way it becomes an integral part of their daily routines."

"What would happen if the water has chemicals in it?"

"Then the plant wouldn't grow."

"It would die."

"It could go down and then go back into the ground."

"Right. It may grow for a little while..."

Boker says every day at St. James is Earth Day. She points to books in all the classrooms and in the library. Most contain materials that urge children to do something to help the environment and protect Earth.

St. James children observe the growth of plants from seeds to sprouts in cups kept in the classroom. Then they watch the plants continue to grow after placing them in the garden. The students also observe the lifecycle of butterflies and other insects and learn about rain and sea life.

St. James also has a special rain garden and a compost container. And, administrators try to use as much recycled material as possible. For example, There are rugs made of recycled tires in all the classrooms.

But do these very young children really get the message that their teachers try to communicate? Ms. Boker says yes.

“Oh they do. They totally understand.”

On April 22 the kids at St. James will go out to the school’s garden for the yearly clean-up. But for them, Earth Day will continue for the school days ahead as well.

## **Old Glory**

Now, a question from China. Zeng Min, who calls herself Amy, wants to know about the history of the American flag.

The United States of America began as 13 British colonies. Each colony had its own flag. But the colonists created a common flag to fight under during the Revolutionary War against Britain.

This flag looked a lot like the American flag today. It had 13 red and white stripes for the 13 colonies. It had a blue square in the upper left corner. Inside the blue area were the red cross and white lines of the British flag.

On July fourth, 1776, the American colonists declared their independence. The United States of America was born.

The Continental Congress of the new nation approved a new flag on June fourteenth, 1777. The 13 red and white stripes remained. But 13 white stars replaced the British flag inside the blue area. The stars represented, in the words of Congress, "a new constellation."

In 1818, American lawmakers approved a law that said a new star would be added to the flag for each new state. Today, there are 50 states, and 50 white stars on the flag.

Francis Hopkinson, a delegate to the Continental Congress, said he designed the flag. Most historians accept his claim.

Just about every American knows the story that a woman named Betsy Ross made the first American flag. Betsy Ross was from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She made flags for many years and was the official flag maker for the Pennsylvania navy. But this is how she came to be known as the maker of the first American flag.

In 1870, a grandson of Betsy Ross, William Canby, wrote a paper about her. He wrote that when he was 11 years old, his grandmother told him the story

of how she made the first United States flag. She told him a committee led by George Washington came to see her in June of 1776. The men asked Betsy Ross to make a flag based on a design they gave her. The stars had six points but Ross suggested that stars with five points would be easier to sew.

During the Revolutionary War, several other people were also known to have made flags for the new nation. Among them were Cornelia Bridges and Rebecca Young of Pennsylvania and John Shaw of Maryland.

The American flag has been called different names, including Stars and Stripes, Old Glory and Star-Spangled Banner. And it is officially celebrated on June 14<sup>th</sup>. In 1949, President Harry Truman declared that date as Flag Day.

### **Kacey Musgraves “Same Trailer Different Park”**

Kacey Musgraves started in the music industry in 2007 as a competitor on the television show “Nashville Star.” However, years followed and no major record company appeared interested in the country singer/songwriter. Last year that changed when she signed an agreement with Mercury Records. Her first album with that label came out last month. “Same Trailer Different Park” is a big hit for Musgraves and Mercury. Kelly Jean Kelly has more.

That is Kacey Musgraves’ song “Merry Go Round.” The single sold more than 500,000 digital copies in the past seven months. It also earned three Academy of Country Music Award nominations.

Critics are comparing Kacey Musgraves to another Texan musician: Miranda Lambert. And the two are connected in another way. Musgraves co-wrote Lambert’s current top ten country song, “Mam’s Broken Heart.”

Kacey Musgraves helped write all twelve songs on “Same Trailer Different Park.” The 24-year-old says emotions guide her work.

“I love observing things, whether it’s myself or other people. It’s kind of my favorite to just like find inspiration and zone in on that and figure out the little facets in that idea. I mean, I’m just inspired by emotions of every kind. I want the record to reflect just well-rounded emotions. I didn’t want the overall tone to be angry or sad. I think there are elements of everything on there.”

“Same Trailer Different Park” entered Billboard Magazine’s Country music list at number one and it was number two on the Top Two Hundred Albums chart. The record is a mix of musical styles, including country, pop, blues and rock. Critics have praised Musgraves’ songwriting. The Washington Post called it “some of the most straightforward storytelling you could ever ask of a dozen country tunes.”

“Hopefully, when people hear ‘Same trailer, Different park,’ they will... obviously love it, but also...I hope they just connect in some way. I mean if I can make somebody feel something then I feel like I’ve done my job as a songwriter.”

We leave you with Kasey Musgraves performing “Blowin Smoke” from her new album “Same Trailer Different Park.”

I’m June Simms. Our program was written and produced by Caty Weaver. Mary Morningstar and Karlina Amkas provided additional reporting.

Do you have a question about American life, people or places? Send an e-mail to [mosaic@voanews.com](mailto:mosaic@voanews.com). We might answer your question in a future show. You can also visit our website at [learningenglish.voanews.com](http://learningenglish.voanews.com) to find transcripts and audio of our shows.

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