

'Earth Mama' highlights Earth Day celebrations

By Nancy Sundstrom

EVERY DAY is Earth Day for Joyce Rouse, though she's planning a special celebration for the annual event when she visits Traverse City this weekend.

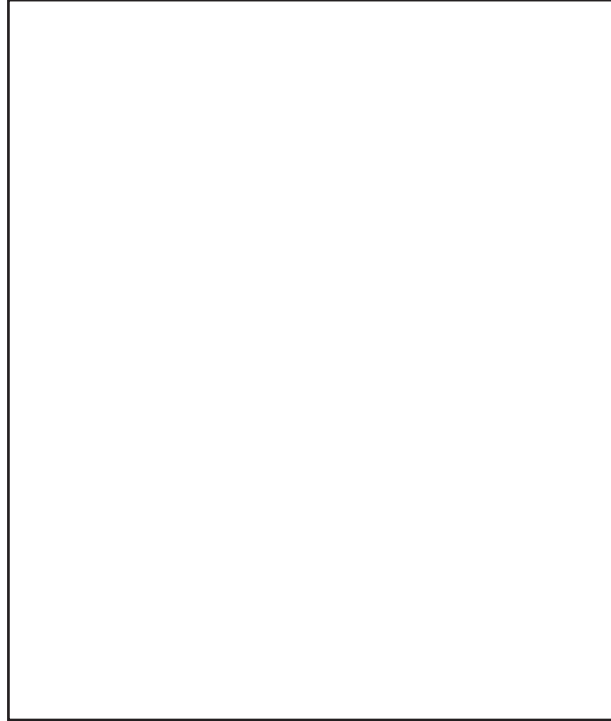
A singer-songwriter, actor and activist from Nashville, Tennessee, who has become known as "Earth Mama" because of her dedication to *helping heal the planet one song at a time*, Rouse will

perform in concert on Saturday at 2 p.m. at the Bay Theatre in Suttons Bay. She'll also participate in concert on Saturday at

2 p.m. at the Bay Theatre in Suttons Bay. She'll also participate in Grand Traverse Region Earth Day festivities that kick off at 1 p.m. on Sunday.

"We've made a conscious expansion to reach out to the mainstream and promote Earth Day as a day of celebration, education and awareness," said Sally Van Vleck, co-director of the Neahtawanta Center. "Musical acts like Earth Mama are a great way to entertain and, at the same time, send a positive message about helping the earth."

Rouse came to the attention of the local Earth Day committee through author and lecturer Stephanie Mills, who had seen her perform. Joyce Rouse is (1) a talented musician, (2) very entertaining, (3) smart and soulful, (4) inventive and funny, (5) a tonic and an inspiration," Mills said. "If you're burned out, she'll rekindle your zeal. And if you're looking for a cause to give your life meaning, she's got the songs suggesting what to do."



Joyce Rouse, Earth Mama

A songwriter in Nashville since 1986, Rouse decided to focus on her own musical career in 1993 and concentrate on creating songs relating to the topic she's the most passionate about — protecting and healing the earth. In short order, she adopted her persona as Earth Mama, put together an album of environmentally themed tunes and began to receive requests to perform at fairs, festivals, conferences and schools. Her latest CD, "Around The World With Earth Mama," includes songs like "Only Take

What You Need," "Less Is More," "Green Blues" — and "Let It Rot" — an ode to composting! With a meld of musical styles from calypso to country rock, Rouse swings her way through music she says is designed to be uplifting and positive.

"There's a great deal of power in *awareness*. We need to take a good look at how we live, work and travel," Rouse said. "There's always something more we can do. And whether it's how we eat, cook or build, everything we do affects the environment."

"I see myself as a cheerleader for the planet, so the message I'm trying to share is that if we all do a little, the impact would be enormous. I want to encourage people to just start somewhere."

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