Showing appreciation for loved ones is on everyone’s mind as we head into February, so don’t forget to love the earth, too! There are many ways to turn your Valentine’s day from green to red: think about sending an e-Valentine or make your own from recycled materials, invest in potted plants or trees instead of fresh cut flowers which die within a few days, choose a local Nashville restaurant for your special dinner, and consider baking your own treats instead of buying chocolates (or buy locally made chocolates like Olive and Sinclair – delicious!). There are plenty of ways to show your love to the earth this month including a tree planting and many lectures and workshops! Don’t forget that Greenest Group on Campus applications are due February 2nd! Additional information about the stories and events included in this newsletter are available on the SustainVU website and Facebook page. SustainVU wishes you a lovely and green Valentine’s Day!

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Up-Cycled Art with SmART– February 1
Get ready for Valentine’s Day by creating fun, quirky Valentine’s art at SmART! Read more here.

Engage Green 2017 Sustainable Social – February 1
Engage Green is Team Green Adventures’s monthly sustainability event series the FIRST WEDNESDAY of each month. It is a partnership with Urban Green Lab, a non-profit organization that provides hands-on educational experiences dedicated to sustainable living. Read more here.

Provisions: Popularizing Hydroponics as Climate Change Adaptation in
has been named winner of the 2017 Vanderbilt basketball sustainability competition. The group celebrated their title of “greenest group on campus” at the Vanderbilt vs. Texas A&M February 16 game. The sustainability competition, was presented by Waste Management, Vanderbilt Athletics, and the Sustainability and Environmental Management Office (SEMO).

Read more here.

Are YOU the greenest group on campus?

Waste Management, Inc., the Vanderbilt Sustainability and Environmental Management Office (SEMO), and VU Athletics, and are looking for the greenest group on campus during this year’s Vanderbilt Basketball Sustainability competition. Your group could win a catered VIP hospitality event for 20 people, 20 tickets to the game, an autographed item from Vanderbilt athletics, and on-court recognition at the Vanderbilt vs. Texas A&M men’s basketball game on February 16, 2017! To qualify, just tell us about the sustainable actions your VU department, organization, class or group regularly do in order to make Vanderbilt a greener campus.

You can fill out the application online or email the pdf application available here to sustainvu@vanderbilt.edu or fax it to 615.343.3883. Applications are due by Thursday, February 2! Good luck and Anchor Down!

Climate change helped kill off super-sized Ice Age animals in Australia
During the last Ice Age, Australia, Tasmania and New Guinea formed a single landmass, called Sahul. It was a strange and often hostile place populated by a bizarre cast of giant animals. There were 500-pound kangaroos, marsupial tapirs the size of horses and wombat-like creatures the size of hippos. There were flightless birds that weighed twice as much as modern emu, 33-foot snakes, 20-foot crocodiles, 8-foot turtles with horned heads and spiked tails, and giant monitor lizards that measured greater than 6 feet from tip to tail and were likely venomous.

By about 30,000 years ago, however, most of these ‘megafauna’ had disappeared from the Sahul as part of a global mass extinction that saw the end of nearly all of the super-sized animals that had evolved to survive in extreme Ice Age climates. The factors that forced the Australian megafauna into extinction remain a matter of considerable controversy. Many experts argue that the ancestors of the Australian aborigines, who made an appearance approximately 50,000 years ago, either hunted them into extinction or gradually destroyed the habitat they required by practices such as fire-stick burning. Others argue that the gradual drying out of Australia and weakening of the Australian monsoon played a major role in their demise.

A new study has compared the diet of a variety of Australian megafaunal herbivores from the period when they were widespread (350,000 to 570,000 years ago) to a period when they were in decline (30,000 to 40,000 years ago) by studying their fossil teeth. “We have found evidence that, as the climate was changing and getting drier, animal diets were shifting dramatically,” said Larisa DeSantis, assistant professor of earth and environmental studies at Vanderbilt University, who directed the study. “If climate change was a primary or contributing factor in their demise, as it appears, we need to pay more attention to how current levels of climate change are affecting animals today.”. Read more here.

Greenway entrance near Cannonsburgh Village in Murfreesboro. Read more here.

**Nutritious & Delicious: All About Paleo – February 15**

In this workshop with Team Green Adventures you’ll learn about the benefits of eating paleo and why the paleo approach is less about eating like a caveman and more about getting back to nature. The event will be on Wednesday, February 15th from 6-7pm at the Nashville Farmers’ Market, 900 Rosa L. Parks Blvd. Read more here.

**Conservation Education Day – February 15**

Conservation Education Day is an opportunity for environmental groups and individuals concerned about a broad range of issues – including clean air, water, land and energy - to come together at Legislative Plaza in Nashville. Meet your legislators and share your views on improving the environment. The group will meet from 9am-3pm at the Nashville Legislative Plaza. Read more here.

**Commons Unplugged: Green Activity – February 18**
Third Annual Commons Unplugged Week for First Year Students

The third annual Commons Unplugged environmental awareness week, from Saturday, February 18 to Saturday, February 25, 2017, will celebrate sustainability, natural resource conservation and energy conservation through various events focusing on Vanderbilt’s first-year student population, although anyone is welcome to attend. These events are presented by The Martha Rivers Ingram Commons, in partnership with the Sustainability and Environmental Management Office and the School for Science and Math at Vanderbilt.

Throughout the week, first-year students will compete in a residence house energy conservation contest to earn points in the year-long campus competition called the Commons Cup. The week will include three events open to the Vanderbilt Community: the Green Kick-off, the Green Fair, and the Green Forum. The Green Kick-off will be held on February 18 and will feature interactive sustainability lessons organized by Vanderbilt Students. The Green Fair will be held on Thursday, February 23 in the Commons Center atrium from 5:00-7:00pm and will feature an organization fair focused on sustainability on campus and around Nashville. The Green Forum will be held on on Wednesday, February 22 from 5:00-6:00pm in the Commons Center multipurpose room. Associate Dean Dan Morgan will be discussing “The past, present, and future of the Antarctic Ice Sheets.” More information is available on the SustainVU website.

Kick off Commons Unplugged, a weeklong sustainability and natural resource conservation event! Students will be organizing a sustainability-themed event on February 18th, so save the date and stay tuned for more details! Read more here.

Climate, Science, and Policy Talk – February 21

Join the Lipscomb University Institute for Sustainable Practice’s founding director, Dodd Galbreath, for a discussion on Climate, Science and Policy on February 21st at 6:00pm at the Nashville Science Club. Read more here.

Commons Unplugged: Green Forum – February 22

Save the date for the 2017 Commons Unplugged Green Forum! Commons Unplugged is a weeklong sustainability and natural resource conservation event, and the Green Forum feature a lecture from Associate Dean Dan Morgan! Dr. Morgan will discuss climate change and sea level rise in his talk “The past, present, and future of the Antarctic Ice Sheets.” Read more here.

Earth Sets a Temperature Record for the Third Straight Year

Marking another milestone for a changing planet, scientists reported last week that the Earth reached its highest temperature on record in 2016, trouncing the record set only a year earlier as well as the one in
2014. It is the first time in the modern era of global warming data that temperatures have blown past the previous record three years in a row.

In 2015 and 2016, the planetary warming was intensified by the weather pattern known as El Niño, in which the Pacific Ocean released a huge burst of energy and water vapor into the atmosphere. But the bigger factor in setting the records was the long-term trend of rising temperatures, which scientists say is being driven by increasing levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

“A single warm year is something of a curiosity,” said Deke Arndt, chief of global climate monitoring for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. “It’s really the trend, and the fact that we’re punching at the ceiling every year now, that is the real indicator that we’re undergoing big changes.”

The finding that a record had been set for the third year in a row was released by three government agencies, two of them American and one British, that track measurements made by ships, buoys and land-based weather stations. They analyze the figures to correct for known problems, producing an annual average temperature for the surface of the Earth. The national meteorological agency of Japan confirmed the findings in a preliminary analysis. Read more here.

For more information on any of these stories, events and more, visit the SustainVU website at www.vanderbilt.edu/sustainvu or contact the Sustainability and Environmental Management Office at sustainvu@vanderbilt.edu or (615) 322-2057.

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