

James Ehlers, of Colchester, is Executive Director of Lake Champlain International. He earned a bachelor's degree from Villanova University, studied graduate education at St. Michael's College and nonprofit management at Michigan State University.

Why did you agree to serve on this committee?

Working on behalf of people and the environment is my life's work, my vocation. I had to.

What specific concerns do you have about the wellbeing of the earth, "our common home?"

None about the earth, per se, but rather I am concerned about all of us who depend on clean air and clean water—that we are exhausting the ability of the Earth to heal itself in time to provide for the needs of future generations and in some cases, even our own. The evidence is pretty conclusive that only the wealthy among us will have access to safe water and air.

What message do you want to convey about care of the earth?

If not us, then who? To not care for the Earth is to turn our backs on our own humanity and that of our children. It is to forsake God and the gift of life. Would you allow someone to poison a child? Then why allow someone to poison the water that child depends on? Or worse, can we bear to accept that we ourselves might be the one doing the poisoning? I should hope not. And the time to go about righting the injustice is now.

How can Vermont Catholics participate in the care of the earth?

How can we not?

What do you say to people who do not understand/believe the seriousness of the situation of the earth?

If someone abused our child or another loved one, we would never stand for it. When we let others abuse our source of sustenance—our source of life—we turn our backs on abuse and abusers. Pollution is nothing more than abuse on the societal scale. Won't you help me to put an end to the abuse?

What motivates you in your work to protect our earth?

I don't really know. I don't really feel like the choice was ever mine to make. Where there is injustice, are any of us free to walk away?