



What's Great About Being Green?

Everyone is talking "green" these days. You know that being green means recycling, using less water and electricity, planting trees, buying organic food, or driving a hybrid car. But you might also think it's too expensive or not part of your culture.

Caring about the earth is important for you and the health and happiness of your family. Being green doesn't have to be difficult, expensive, or exclusive. In fact, now is the time to step up as leaders and help build a community that is truly "green for all."

Why Should I Care?

As youth environmentalist Kari Fulton says, "If you live on this planet, you are an environmentalist." All of us breathe air, use water, eat food, and need energy to heat our homes, get around, and just live. We need each other to protect the soil, water and the air. (To listen to Kari's story, find her video at WireTap magazine online: <http://www.wiretapmag.org/environment/44129>.)

Think about it:

Your body, your home, and your neighborhood are intimately connected to all life on earth.

- Breathing polluted air in your home or neighborhood can cause asthma, cancer, and other illnesses.
- Some pesticides on vegetables, growth hormones in meat, lead and other metals in the soil are "eaten" by the plants and animals that are then eaten by us, which can cause health problems.
- Burning coal and oil for electricity and transportation have contributed to global warming, which lead to flooding, drought, hurricanes, and other natural disasters.

Being Green is Great!

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| Green Saves Green | The less you use, the less you pay for. People save money not only by using less, but also by selling unwanted items and reusing what you have instead buying new things. |
| Green is Healthy | What's good for the earth is good for you. For example, trees act like air conditioners, making hot cities cooler. Forests and oceans are like "the lungs of the Earth," taking in carbon dioxide and giving off oxygen. |
| Being Green is Being a Leader | Making even small changes in your lifestyle can help heal the deep damages done to our soil, water and air. By doing your part, you are living an example that others will follow. |
| Green Creates Community-based Jobs | As we build a new sustainable economy, many good local jobs with decent pay will be created. Your skills as a leader and home builder will be valuable, since construction and job training are the basis for many local green jobs. The new green jobs cannot be sent overseas since they are directly focused on the improvement of our communities. |

Now What Do I Do?

If you live in a low-income household, chances are you already know how to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Moms stretching household budgets have long been environmentalists by buying food in bulk, drying laundry on a line, and, of course, the old standby—using hand-me-downs.

What low-income communities struggle with is getting the information, tools, and power to confront the big polluters that have often dumped wastes into poor communities and communities of color. We can share with one another inexpensive ways to be more environmentally responsible and join together as a force against big polluters.

Lots of people go green because it simply saves money. Happily, not only are the following practices good for the pocketbook, they are good for your health and the health of the planet.

- Walk or ride a bicycle instead of driving.
- Buy in bulk and grow your own food for cheap, nutritious, and less toxic meals. Even in an apartment building, you can grow plants such as lettuce and beans in window boxes.
- Find a consignment shop where you can sell your old clothes and find “new” ones.
- Turn down your water heater to 120 degrees to save energy while maintaining a comfortable temperature for showering, or ask your landlord to do so.
- Switch to compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs), which use approximately one-third the energy and last 10 times as long as standard bulbs.
- The average American household can save \$170 per year by using water efficient fixtures and identifying leaks. A dripping faucet wastes 20 gallons of water a day. Fix the drips and save money.

What “green practice” could you add to the list?



Link and Learn

Green For All is working to build an inclusive green economy strong enough to lift people out of poverty.

www.greenforall.org

The movie *An Inconvenient Truth* explains the climate crisis. The official movie website offers related facts and ways to take action.

www.climatecrisis.net

The Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative (EJCC) works toward “climate justice.”

www.ejcc.org