

**ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING** Peter Schwartzman

# Celebrate Spring greenly

Since spring is a time for rebirth, renewal, song and spirit, it makes sense that it is also a time to look at all the positive things that all of us can do to make ourselves and our environment better. Over the past several years, I have encountered many people who express powerlessness or hopelessness as it concerns the quality of our environment. Often, I hear sentiments like, "What can one person do?; I can do something but that isn't going to make that much of a difference." Perhaps this list of possibilities will help dispel these pessimistic views and the melancholy that often accompanies them. This list is certainly not exhaustive, so please send your letters suggesting other activities and actions that have made you and your surroundings happier and healthier.

Next time you get the urge to go to the mall, take a detour and walk in one of the many parks in our city. Galesburg has many parks that are great to walk in: Standish Park, Lake Storey, Lincoln Park, Kiwanis Park, and Rotary Park, to name but a few. A good walk in a park will not only allow you to commune with the wonderful life forms that inhabit our neighborhoods, the air quality will be much better (than in the mall), your bank account will be a lot bigger, and the landfill will last a lot longer too.

Next time you feel the need to put toxic chemicals on your lawn or garden (or ask someone else to do it for you), just don't. Why not? Well, consider the trade offs. You might be guaranteed a greener lawn will fewer weeds if you use a soup of chemicals but you'll also be guaranteed to have the following as well: poison in the local lakes, rivers and groundwater; poison in your lungs, your neighbor's lungs, your neighbor's children's lungs, your pet's skin and lungs, your neighbor's pet's skin and lungs, the song birds, the rabbits, etc.; and, an increased number of headaches, respiratory ailments, neurological disorders, and birth defects. What is more important to you? And when you make the change, realize that you are helping break our dependence on toxic, poorly-understood, inadequately tested, synthetic chemicals. Tomorrow could be the day for new attitudes and behaviors concerning your lawn.

Next time you get on the Internet, spend a few seconds at either of the following websites, make a few clicks, and make a positive difference in the lives of women with breast cancer, children with hunger, and animals without shelter. Website #1: <<http://rainforest.care2.com/>>; Website #2: <<http://www.thehungersite.com/>>. How does this work? Well, the people that run these sites have gotten advertisers to pay a small amount for every visit the websites get. The advertisers are worth a visit too but you need not visit them unless you click their banners. You can visit these sites, and therefore get the advertisers to donate funds, once a day. Spending just a minute doing this each day can make one feel very good.

Next time you do anything in or to your house, consider how much carbon dioxide emission could be spared by making any one of the following changes. Using an "energy-efficient" dishwasher only when it is full and with no heat cycle can save 200 pounds of carbon dioxide from getting into the atmosphere each year. Washing clothes in warm or cold water (rather than hot, which happens to be unnecessary with recent improvements in detergents) can spare the atmosphere of up to 500 pounds of carbon dioxide each year. Changing your shower-head to a low-flow one (that works just as well) could save 300 pounds of carbon dioxide. For every 25 percent you



reduce your waste stream (by buying items that use minimum packaging or by reusing "waste" for projects), you can reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 1,000 pounds yearly! Every pound of recycled paper spares the atmosphere of approximately four pounds of carbon dioxide as well.

Next time you plan to sit down and watch a rerun or old sitcom, stand up and take a walk with a friend. Even better, bring a garbage bag with you when you walk so you can pick up bottles, cans, and cigarette packs that may have "accidentally" found their way into our streets and yards. You're bound to get a lot more enjoyment talking to a friend and cleaning up your neighborhood, not to mention the exercise, than you would sitting in front of the "boob" tube. Consider that, on a global scale, people in the industrialized world now spend half of their leisure time sitting in front of the television. Someone needs to buck this trend. Why not start with yourself?

Next time you consider a vacation, rather than focusing on lands far away, consider visiting a regional landmark. By doing so, you'll not only be saving a huge amount of money, but you will also be reducing the amount of fossil fuel that gets burnt, the amount of toxins that will be emitted into the atmosphere, soil and water, and the amount of land that needs to be paved (leaving more for other species or for agriculture). Further, you will become more familiar and more knowledgeable about the place you live—both things that will likely make you feel better and more connected with your environment. If you can't think about anywhere to go, that is a sure sign that you must be missing something. Consider the following wonders that exist within 3-4 hours drive of Galesburg: Apple River Canyon State Park (in Jo Daviess County; website: <http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/Landmgt/PARKS/R1/APPLE.HTM>), Starved Rock State Park (in La Salle County; website: <http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/i&m/east/starve/park.htm>), Dickson Mounds Museum (in Fulton County; website: <http://www.museum.state.il.us/ismsites/dickson/homepage.htm>), Morton Arboretum (in Cook County; website: <http://www.mortonarb.org/>), Missouri Botanical Gardens (in St. Louis), and the Chicago Botanic Garden (website: <http://www.chicagobotanic.org/>). Visit one of these masterpieces; you (and your family) won't be disappointed. And what better way to support the local economy than by supporting ecological protection

mpg, just imagine the amount of gas and gaseous emissions that you will save. If you go ahead and purchase one of these hybrids, consider yourself an important contributor to the shift towards more environmentally-friendly technologies.

Next time you are having a craving for something tasty, consider coming down to the farmer's market and picking out locally-grown produce. The variety of things one can find will amaze and the taste and texture of these bountiful morsels will delight any palate. You'll even have a chance to meet (and support) your neighboring farmers who are doing their best to sustain the local soils and water tables. You may even have a chance to learn some new recipes because these farmers grow some scrumptious eggplants, collard greens, and, who could forget, acorn squash.

Next time you hear some cynical, pessimistic person attempt to dissuade you of the impact that one person can make, don't hesitate to offer him or her a friendly piece of advice. Assuming your mood has improved as a result of taking some of the above steps, your positive energy will be infectious and your advice appreciated. Let them know how empowered and invigorated you feel. It is definitely important to show people that there is something personally energizing and rewarding in becoming environmentally sound. Moreover, it takes individuals like you to communicate this all-important message.

Have a great spring and let's work towards a healthier and happier planet. Please share your stories with us as you walk down a greener path.

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and respect for our planet's biological treasures.

Spring is a time that may people feel compelled to purchase a new (or used) car. If you are so compelled consider buying one that is small (rather than big) and energy efficient. Consider that for every year that you drive a car, you will spare the atmosphere 2,500 pounds of carbon emission for every improvement of 10 miles to the gallon (mpg) that you demand; so in other words, a car that gets 30 mpg will release 5,000 pounds less of carbon per year than a SUV (or small truck) that might only get ~10 mpg. The savings won't only be in the Earth's favor. With escalating fuel costs, you are likely to save literally thousands of dollars at the pump, per year, as well. A 30 mpg vehicle will cost ~\$900 per year at the pump while a 10 mpg vehicle will cost over \$2700! (assuming 15,000 miles of driving, and fuel at today's prices). If you can afford to get a hybrid vehicle that gets close to 50

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