

Preserving Our Planet

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Picture this: It is a bitter cold day when two girls pull their coats more snug around them and persist onwards up the street. They turn into the walk of the next house and with stiff fingers, ring the doorbell. Moments later the door opens to show a smiling old woman who exclaims at once, "Oh my, is this Girl Scout cookies!?" Patiently, the taller child begins to explain that they are members of an environmentally active club that is raising awareness about plastic products, which are more harmful towards the earth than helpful. "Plastic bags for instance," she announces, "litter streets and no matter what won't break down. They also take a ridiculous amount of energy to make; in a world where conserving energy is important, plastics really don't fit in. What we're doing is selling biodegradable trash bags made of corn and egg products that decompose when exposed to bacteria. Yes----they are more expensive, but if you take this small step in buying a box of bags it would really make a difference in the long run. The old woman's smile has long since vanished and with a forced smile she says "maybe some other time dears". As the door shuts on the children's disappointed faces, they turn away and start again at the next house.

This seemingly small event is in fact a reality for many people that try to get others to be environmentally active. It's human nature to live as conveniently as possible without much consideration for what's convenient for others... or for the world. So many people dismiss the fact that energy needs to be conserved and instead use so much energy that if everyone thought that way, it would take multiple earths to keep us happy.

I believe organizations like the one mentioned above, is one of the best ways to raise awareness about conserving energy. Polyethylene plastic supermarket and trash bags must stop being produced. This would not only save the energy put into making these plastics, but also diminish greatly the amount of stray plastic bags. This is one of the many problems that deal with energy. My family has never purchased plastic trash bags; in the past we have reused supermarket shopping bags for trash but now we no longer do this. After learning about biodegradable products, I co-founded Greenkidzz with my sister and that's when we started making a difference. Now we use biodegradable trash bags and sell them to everyone we can; this includes selling around our neighborhood. Not everyone in our community is interested in what we have to say but the people who are, make sure to conserve energy as much as possible, whether it's turning off the light when they leave a room or installing sun panels on their roof. The smallest consideration for our earth makes so much of a difference.

Other ways to save energy include turning down the water heater thermostat (saves 440-600 pounds of C02 emissions a year), cleaning air filters whenever necessary (saves about 175 pounds of C02 each year) and planting trees (each one can absorb up to 25 pounds of C02 every year). This list can go on and on but because of limited space, I won't continue. There are many inexpensive and efficient ways to conserve energy. I already conserve energy in simple but effective ways, but there are other ways to conserve energy that I'd like to try right away.

Being one of four children, there are numerous chores for me to do in my household. But now, I plan to "Be Green" as I do them. I recently learned that setting the washing machine to

warm or cold water instead of hot can save 150-500 pounds of CO₂ per year and I plan to keep that in mind whenever I do the laundry from now on. Also turning off the dishwasher before the drying cycle saves 20% of the electricity that runs the dishwasher. The next time I do the dishes I will be saving electricity by just taking the time to wipe the dishes dry.

But. ... in reality, if the family down the street never turns their heat up above sixty degrees...will it change the world? Of course not, which is why government involvement is important to bring the issue of conserving energy to the United States. I have already contacted some elected officials to support conserving energy, including John Kerry, Ed Kennedy and Cynthia Stone Creem. They wrote back to me saying that they were enthusiastic about helping the environment to the best of their ability. In the west coast, especially California, these issues, to a certain extent, have already been addressed. Composting plants have replaced landfills and the average family owns biodegradable trash bags. This should be the norm all over the U.S.! If I were to write to Congress, I would mention investing in developing alternative fuel sources, holding industrial organizations accountable for pollution, making stricter laws about automobile fuel standards, encouraging people to use energy efficient products and supporting public transportation. Sun panels should be installed on all major government buildings. A wind farm that includes multiple giant windmills has been seriously considered being built off the Cape Cod coastline, and now it seems definite that it will happen. It is so nice to know that our government has taken up the initiative to conserve energy. But there's more that the government can do. Composting plants should be built all over the US because instead of sitting in landfills, trash would instead be composted and go back into the earth. In other words, our garbage can be, ultimately, re-used! Our main goal should be to preserve our planet for generations to come.

Although conserving energy is an issue today it doesn't have to be an issue tomorrow. Do all you can to save energy at home and tell others what you are doing so that they can benefit off of you. Once you change yourself you can change the world. It will take some time but we have to come together and start now, because United We Can!