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GREEN BUILDING: Living green at home can make a difference

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WNC GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL

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Green building is not just about green construction. It is also about living green, living consciously. There are many things everyone can do that cost little or no money and actually save money. When done collectively, these things can have a huge environmental impact. It just takes a willingness to be aware and to change old habits. If we choose to conserve energy and resources we will have less waste to recycle. Recycling is good but still uses energy. Conservation conserves energy and preserves our valuable natural resources.

So here are some thoughts about simple things you can do that have enormous impact:

1. Turn off lights when you leave a room, turn off your porch light before you go to bed, use compact fluorescent bulbs.

"If every household in the U.S. replaced one light bulb with an Energy Star qualified compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL), it would prevent enough pollution to equal removing one million cars from the road," according to the U.S. government Energy Star Web site.) They cost about \$2.50 each but save more than \$30 in energy costs over the life of the bulb.

2. Wear a sweater indoors in the winter and use a programmable thermostat to turn down the heat at night and when away from home. Try 68 degrees Fahrenheit or less during the day and 60 degrees when you're away or sleeping. You'll save about 1 percent for every degree of night setback. Programmable thermostats cost \$30 to \$40.

3. Buy a net shopping bag. Hang it on your outdoor door handle and put in under the seat of your car so it is always handy when you need it. This can literally save hundreds of plastic shopping bags in one household per year. Plastic bags are an environmental hazard and take hundreds of years to decompose.

4. Make your own drinks instead of buying canned and bottled drinks. More than 40 million bottles a day go into the trash or become litter. About 10 percent to 30 percent are recycled. Ideas for healthy drinks:

- Mix one lemon and a teaspoon of raw honey in a gallon of filtered water
- Make herbal teas: nettle, oat straw, cinnamon and ginger are great easy teas to make
- Buy a juicer and make carrot and vegetable juice and dilute with filtered water

5. Buy bulk organic foods in health food stores: grains, beans, cereals, nuts, oils, flour and honey. Packaging waste is overpowering our landfills. Buying bulk saves packaging and supports organic farming.

6. Use cold water for clothes washing and hang laundry outside to dry.

7. Don't warm your car up. If your car stalls below 32 degrees F you need to warm up the engine. The best way

to warm up the engine is to drive gently for 5 minutes, according to Car Talk.

8. Wash dishes by hand in 2 inches of soapy hot water.

9. Take 5-minute showers instead of baths with a low-flow showerhead. Low-flow showerheads use about 1/3 the amount of water as regular showerheads and give plenty of water pressure.

10. Buy a hybrid car when buying a new car. Cost is about \$20,000.

Energy will be the hot topic of this century. Conserve when you can and use it wisely when you can't!

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