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Resolutions to Lower your Carbon Footprint

Perhaps your New Year's resolution is to lose some weight, save some money, get more organized and learn something new. Did you know that acting on these resolutions not only helps you personally, but also helps the planet?

Let's start with eating healthy and losing weight. Losing weight takes eating less and better and getting some exercise. Something occurred to me a few months ago as I started my own journey of losing 30 pounds (I am half way there) – not only am I eating less and in a healthier way, but by eating less I am actually reducing my environmental impact. I've noted that fresh food has way less packaging and often I can buy local products instead of products shipped from far away. The winter months are the time to settle down to stews with root vegetables like turnip, squash, potatoes and carrots. They can come from local growers and have little to no packaging!

Getting more exercise can have carbon footprint reducing effect too! Walk to your local grocery store or park away from traffic congestion in parking lots to minimize idling while you wait for parking spaces to open up. Better yet, challenge yourself to take the parking space the furthest away from the store – the result is more fresh air and exercise to and from the store. And if you live close to your gym, challenge yourself to walk there as part of your workout.

Saving money and paying off debt also helps the environment. Saving money means that we are spending less on consumer products. Every product we purchase has an environmental impact or carbon footprint as part of its production process and transportation to get to store shelves. Here are some things to think about: Do you need it? How is it packaged? Are you able to reuse it, pass it on, compost it, or recycle it? Or will it end up in the landfill?

Getting organized is a popular New Year's resolution. There are many things we can do to improve the efficiency of our personal and professional lives that help reduce our environmental impact. This is called 'living and working smarter'.

On a professional note, I have spent the last few months moving as close as I can to a truly paperless office. *Microsoft One Note* is an excellent tool to help store notes electronically instead of using paper. When you do have to use paper - make sure it is of recycled content, print on both sides, then make sure it ends up in your recycling bin not your garbage can. Also, if your document isn't for professional use, switch your printer to print 'draft' copy (often called 'fast/economical' printing). This saves you money in ink cartridges and reduces your toxic waste associated with cartridge disposal. Many companies (HP is one of them) provide an envelope with your printer cartridges so you can send them back to the company (for free) once they are empty so they can be recycled.

Organizing our personal lives matters too. Taking kids to hockey, dance, skating and piano can have a significant environmental impact in terms of gas consumed and greenhouse gases emitted by our vehicles. Taking a few minutes early in the day to coordinate errands and activities not only helps us save valuable time but also reduces our gas consumption by minimizing the miles we travel and also the idling time associated with pick-ups and drop-offs.

Finally, learning something new is a very popular New Year's resolution. Why not make 2008 the year you learn more about climate change and what you can do about it. To set you on your way, www.greenmattersfredericton.com provides loads of helpful information and links. Turn your resolutions into reality this year – you will help yourself and the environment.

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