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NEWSLETTER FROM THE CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

New Life for Your Old Clothes

Donating your unwanted clothing and household goods to charity isn't a new or novel idea. Even still, in 2011 the average person in Connecticut threw away 55 pounds of clothing, shoes, and linens. What a waste! Ninety-five percent of these items could have been reused and recycled, saving disposal costs, creating jobs and realizing environmental benefits. CT DEEP recently held an in-depth [Panel Discussion on Textiles Reuse and Recycling](#) to address this issue.



Baled textiles headed for reuse.

Many of us are reluctant to donate clothing and other fabric items like sheets, towels and underwear (all of which are referred to as "textiles") if they are too worn out. Even if textiles are stained, missing buttons, worn or torn, they can still be used. Only items that are wet, mildewed, odorous or oily should not be donated.

And it's not just textiles from households and individuals. Hospitals, nursing homes, hotels, colleges and universities and some government agencies (prisons, police, social services) can also donate their old bed linens, table linens, scrubs and uniforms.

According to Secondary Materials and Textile Recycling, or [SMART](#), donated textiles are separated into three categories — 45% remain as usable clothing, 30% become rags and other wiping and polishing cloths used in commercial and industrial settings, and 20% is reprocessed into fibers for furniture stuffing, upholstery, insulation, sound proofing, carpet padding, building and other materials. Only 5% is unusable and discarded.

So please remember to [donate EVERYTHING!](#) Most of the major charities, such as Goodwill Industries and Salvation Army participate in SMART. Some smaller, local organizations and churches may not, so check with them first.

Mohegan Sun Wins with CT Green Lodging

As you step into Mohegan Sun, you are greeted with its excitement and grandness. But underneath all that, its day-to-day operations are quietly guided by an environmental mission that includes “protection of the Tribe’s land, air, and water and preventing the deterioration of natural resources” while “ensuring the safety and health of all tribal members, employees and visitors within the Mohegan Indian Reservation.”



Recycling is made easy for guests at Mohegan Sun with a place mat on the desk for collecting recyclables.

The Tribe’s commitment to respect for the Earth is evident throughout their facility. Their hotel, part of Connecticut’s Green Lodging program, showcases their mission — earning the largest number of points of any hotel in the state’s program.

The energy-efficiency measures taken are state-of-the-art. Magnetic strips on the guest room doors signal the HVAC system to turn on when guests enter the room. The room temperature is allowed to drift between 60-85 degrees if guests are not present, saving energy and operating expenses, and returns to the guests’ selected temperature setting when they reenter the room. The energy features of the entire complex are monitored on an energy management system and can be controlled by building operations personnel.

Some other features include: collection of food waste for use by a local pig farmer; separation of two types of grease (yellow grease that is reused, and brown grease that becomes fuel); Green Seal cleaners for glass and counters; variable-speed drives on HVAC motors; low-flow toilets and showers; aerators on sinks; programmable interior and exterior timers for lights; and the use of energy-efficient lighting, LED exit signs and vending machine misers.

Mohegan Sun also supports a parcel of reforested land in Costa Rica to help offset the facility’s carbon emissions. The sequestration and long-term storage of carbon by tropical forest vegetation is one way to balance or offset those emissions that affect climate change.

Green Hotels are winners! As people try to live a more “green” lifestyle, more are choosing to spend their money at facilities that are also “green.” Energy upgrades and other green practices save money for the business and create a healthier place for its guests and employees. Connecticut’s Green Lodging program provides “points” for environmental actions taken in a variety of areas such as energy, housekeeping, HVAC, water conservation and landscape maintenance. Certified hotels range from a 5-room bed and breakfast to Mohegan Sun with its nearly 1,200 rooms. More information at www.ct.gov/deep/greenlodging.

Raising Green Families: Green Your Teen

(This is the third of a three-part series. The author is a college intern who worked this summer at DEEP)

Raising your children to live green lifestyles is as important for the health of your family as it is for the future of the earth. Often teenagers have little time or patience to think about how their lifestyle choices are affecting the environment. Here are some suggestions from Rebecca, a 20-year-old environmental advocate.

Make it routine

If there is one thing teenagers are good at, it's rejecting everything their parents say. The key is to not impose sustainability upon them but to make it a part of their everyday routine. It's best to start incorporating these practices with younger children so as they enter their teenage years green living is the only way. Because my parents had been recycling all my life, it is second nature to me. It feels uncomfortable when I can't recycle my waste properly. On the other hand, my parents never composted food scraps. Now I live in a house with a compost bin, but I occasionally forget and dispose of my food scraps in the trash. If my parents had composted, it would be more intuitive to me.

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Explain yourself

Don't be pushy but explain what you are doing and why it is important. Initiate a discussion with them; ask them how they feel about it, and be sure to take their opinions into account. They are more likely to support a sustainable practice if they feel as though they contributed to its adoption. For example, if you turn down your heat in the winter, let them know that this was a deliberate choice to use less energy. The same is true for when you turn off lights and electronics so they are not being left on unnecessarily. If you are shopping with your teen, show them what eco-friendly products (such as cleaning and household supplies) you buy and why.

Inspire them

It's easier to be passionate about environmental issues if you feel personally connected. I can trace my interest to a backpacking trip I took in the Rocky Mountains when I was fourteen. Enamored by the mountains and forests around me, I realized I wanted to help protect the world's natural places. Since that trip, my interests in environmental protection have directed many of my choices. Inspire your teens by connecting them with the natural world. Go hiking, camping, and boating with them; teach them how to garden organically or to fish sustainably.

Take them to the farmer's market or start growing vegetables at home; then have them help you cook with local foods. The more hands-on an activity is, the more likely your teenagers will feel personally connected to its corresponding environmental issue. Once your teenagers develop a strong connection to the environment, they will value sustainability for the rest of their lives.

For more resources, go to www.ct.gov/deep/p2.



Other Ways to Green your Teens

- Encourage carpooling, offer to drive their friends too. Don't idle. Show them how to use the bus to get places. Promote walking to school or biking.
- Cook a meatless meal at least once a week.
- Go shopping together at thrift stores or consignment shops to show that you value "Reuse."

Ask Eartha

I became concerned when I was recently putting up some holiday-type lighting and noticed a label that says they contain lead. I checked my other lighting sets and they also have this warning. Any suggestions?

Teresa G., New Britain, CT



A warning label is required by California on many household items sold in that state containing chemicals which may cause cancer, birth defects or reproductive harm. This is in response to California's Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, known as **Proposition 65**. Most companies label all their products that contain these chemicals, even if they are sold in other states.

The outside insulation on electrical cords and lighting wiring is usually made of PVC plastic, which often contains lead. Lead is used in PVC for several reasons. For wires and cords, lead makes the plastic more flexible and reduces the risk of fire. For years, electrical manufacturers were selling these products without the required California warning labels. As a result of a 2002 lawsuit settlement, manufacturers have to comply with the California labeling requirement and also include the chemical name in the warning.

Some tips for you and your family:

Wash your hands after touching wires — Most electrical wires and cables have lead in their outside PVC plastic coating. You can get exposed to lead by handling the wires and then ingest it by putting your hands to your mouth or eating food right after. Don't assume the wires are free of lead if they don't have a warning label.

Don't let children touch the wires — The effect of lead on children's nervous systems is even more of a concern because their brains are still developing and their bodies take in lead more readily than adults. Keep holiday lights at a high enough level that curious toddlers can't reach them.

Avoid PVC whenever possible — It is virtually impossible to live without cords and wiring. But **PVC (#3 plastic)** is used for other products that have safer alternatives

— items such as decorations, toys and food/drink containers. No other plastic contains or releases as many dangerous chemicals in its production, use and disposal.

Replace your old lights with energy-efficient LEDs and consider using a timer so that the lights aren't on longer than they need to be. You still have to be cautious when handling the wires but will be using about 65 percent less electricity and creating less pollution — making it a happier and healthier environment for everyone!

Eartha

Eartha answers selected environmental questions. Email your question to **judith.prill@ct.gov** and watch future issues for your answer.

Doing a fall clean out? There still may be time to bring your unwanted pesticides, pool chemicals, old gasoline, etc. to a household hazardous waste collection – **www.ct.gov/deep/hhw**



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