

## **What actions of today could create a better community in 2050?**

*By Charlene Tritt*

Is there any single person who can do everything possible to conserve resources?

Perhaps the six people in my family will illustrate some possibilities, or ideas to consider. Most of the family is very science oriented.

My father, an engineer, liked to record everything: a notebook of daily high and low temperatures, his gas mileage, and for a while he even timed stoplights to help find the quickest route home. With a well insulated 1990 house, heat bills were very low. He kept a close eye on those numbers. He was a precise gardener with vegetables in straight rows, which produced daily ingredients for tossed salad each summer.

My mother was raised in the depression and saved everything: wrapping paper, boxes, ribbon, and old clothes which went into the "rag bag" for cleaning cloths. She even saved her three daughters' Prom dresses for 30 years, hoping they would be worn more than once.

My family had three girls then a boy. My brother, nine years younger, is also an engineer who loves to record things. He bought a hybrid car which he plugs in each night and drives 20 miles round trip to work. The car uses electricity for about 50 miles before it requires use of gas engine. He rarely needs to put gas in the car and he can tell you how very few gallons he has used since purchasing in 2012, and goes several months without stopping for gas. He observed that using the car's heat and conditioning used more electricity. I have experienced some uncomfortable rides with him in the cold winter without car heater on and even more miserable rides in summer (even days over 100 degrees) without using the air conditioner, all to avoid using gas.

My sister, four years younger, lives in Seattle. She sets her house heat at 55 degrees and wears layers of clothes or jackets in the house. Seattle Power and Light has a competition ranking wattage use for 100 houses in her neighborhood. She strives to be in the top ten and once was number two out of 100 for the lowest use of electricity. She makes a great effort to limit her electricity use, with LED lights, and posts her monthly electric bill on her refrigerator to show off her good scores to her neighbors.

My other sister, two years younger, also tries hard to keep electricity use low. She bought a gadget, called a Kill-a-Watt, that can measure the output of appliances with "low power mode" like computers, clock radios, and TV's that are plugged in but not turned on. She demonstrated to us at our house how much electricity they use after a few hours. The worst of all is the TV, even when turned off, while it stays in low power mode. Since hearing that, I unplug a clock radio if going out of town. But I refuse to crawl under a table to unplug the TV each night. She has convinced all in the family to use LED lights in the house and solar lights in the yard. She also conserves water in many ways. She takes a shower with two pails to catch the gray water which she will then use to water plants or wash her car. She wants people to brush teeth without letting the water run, which I do at her house, but not my own.

As for me, I do not record as many things as my siblings, but I save a lot of things, more like my mother. I try hard to keep things out of the land fill. When I first moved to Lake Oswego forty years ago, the land fill under BridgePort village was a very deep quarry. That filled in a few years. The next land fill where Lake Oswego garbage was taken was to an area off 205 and Park Place where the Home Depot now stands. Of course the garbage rates go up to pay for the

transportation to land fills further and further away. The Republic Services company (formerly Allied Waste) gives a reduced rate if people can use a smaller size garbage can. I have the insert which makes my can smaller, 20 gallons instead of typical 35 gallons, and with just two of us, is rarely filled to half-way. It saves about \$6.50 each month. Some people get the once a month garbage pick up.

My recycle bin is usually full, though. I became inspired to recycle more after seeing nine separate categories of bins in New Zealand. The clear plastic containers for contain berries or salads, clear cups for cold drinks, etc. are taken to the recycle center at base of Foothills Road. Styrofoam (white only), more plastics and electronics can go to Far West Fibers Recycle center near Denny Road in Beaverton. Bottles and plastic bags go to the grocery store, of course. Since Lake Oswego tap water is so good, we rarely use bottled water which saves extra recycling.

Composting of coffee grounds, vegetable scraps, leaves, etc., produces several wheel barrows of good dirt each year. Rain barrels connected to downspouts supply many gallons of water to the yard. Prom dresses can go to a charity in West Linn called Abby's Closet. Clothes that are not good enough for Goodwill or Salvation Army can go to a clothing drop off bin located at various points around Lake Oswego. Goodwill accepts broken TV's. Old cupboards, sinks, tiles from remodeling can be picked up by Habitat Restore for a tax donation.

Perhaps, between all of us in the family, we can make a dent in conserving resources for the future. Or at least save some money. Or drive other family member's nuts.

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