

A SORTED AFFAIR

Sailing Ships and Bio Knees

by Jane Bogner

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There is so much green information out there that it is sometimes difficult to sift through what is relevant. Some exciting products never make it past the prototypes. The following two are promising.

An interesting twist to using less energy has been launched by a Germany-based shipping company. They are testing a massive kite-like sail on a huge cargo ship that will soon cross the Atlantic Ocean. Using this 1,700 square-foot sail could possibly offset up to 15 percent of the fuel used on the journey. It's hardly a return to purely wind-powered shipping, but it's a start for the polluting maritime shipping industry.

Scientists at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia are working on a knee brace that is designed to harvest energy from a walker's stride. The prototype weighs in at 3.5 pounds but a lightweight version is in the works. Initially designed to supply power to motorized prosthetic joints, it could also benefit stroke victims, amputees, and others who rely on power-assisted medical devices for mobility. And, one minute of walking with this brace can generate enough energy to power a cell phone for 10 minutes.

As I continue to dress my stitches after skin cancer removal, I look more closely at the ointment that the doctor asked me to use. I had never thought about it before, but here I am, trying to be green and healthy, and putting petroleum jelly on my face. I went online and found non-petroleum jellies and even a homemade recipe. Needless to say, I will start looking for that greener ointment the next time I go out shopping.

My current health mantra is to wear sunscreen and a hat. But then I remembered to look at the list of ingredients in the sunscreen. We all know there are many chemicals there too and these chemicals [along with medications] are showing up in our waterways.

National Geographic News reported on a problem with coral bleaching. It seems that 6,000 tons of sunscreen washes off ocean swimmers each year and this is posing a threat to coral reefs. According to a study in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*, four common sunscreen chemicals can awaken dormant viruses in coral-dwelling algae. The viruses replicate to the point that the algae explode, spilling the viruses into surrounding seawater and infecting neighboring coral populations. The algae, called zooxanthellae, provide coral with food energy and contribute to reefs' bright colors. Without zooxanthellae, the coral bleaches and dies.

Speaking of water, for the week of March 16, diners at participating restaurants who choose to drink tap water instead of bottled water are asked to donate a dollar for this free water to Unicef's Tap Project.

Started last year in New York City, Tap Project reminds us that lack of clean and accessible drinking water is the second largest worldwide killer of children under five. For every dollar raised, a child will have clean drinking water for 40 days. Last year, Tap Project raised \$100,000 in New York. This year, San Francisco and twelve more cities have come onboard. Go to www.taproject.org for more information.

Vallejo Curbside Update

You can now put #5 Polypropylene yogurt containers, butter tubs and their lids in your blue curbside recycling toter and remember to put your toters out only when full. For more curbside information contact Vallejo Garbage Recycling Manager, Lisa Lefebvre at 707 552-3110.

VALCORE Recycling Board Secretary Jane Bogner's "A Sorted Affair" is published every other week in the Times-Herald. For recycling information call VALCORE Recycling at 645-8258 or visit www.VALCORErecycling.org.

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