

I recently attended the Youth Environmental Summit presented by Peace Jam (www.PeaceJamSolano.org) at Vacaville High School. Over fifty students gave up a day of their spring break to learn how their actions can improve the environment.

They attended workshops on water use, Zero Waste living, composting and calculating their carbon footprint.

Keynote speaker, Professor Ann Savageau, presented an overview of the problems that we are facing with the abundance of plastic that we are producing each day that is used only once and then thrown away. Some of it ends up in landfills, but a lot of it is in our waterways and in the Pacific Ocean garbage gyre.

As an environmental design teacher at UC Davis, she encourages her student to design no-waste cradle to cradle products. Her BAG project encourages people all over the globe to get involved in making stylish shopping bags out of fabric scraps that are routinely thrown away.

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that worldwide we use more than one trillion plastic shopping bags annually with less than 1percent of these being recycled. In addition, there is an estimated 2.5 billion pounds of textile waste created annually in the U.S. alone.

I guess I was ahead of my time as I started making denim shopping bags out of manufacturing scraps from a fabric shop in Reno. These bags are over twenty years old and holding up well.

The students finished the day planting trees on campus. They also took home this list of ten things they could do today to Live Green:

1. Reuse before you recycle.
2. Recycle all you can in your community.
3. Borrow instead of buying.
4. Buy recycled goods.
5. Do not litter.
6. Drive slow, drive less, and drive smart.
7. Use a reusable bottle filled with tap water.
8. Use less heat and air conditioning.
9. Unplug electronics.
10. Encourage others and stay informed

Professor Savageau shared with us a new website: www.goodguide.com. Vacaville's recycling coordinator, Mindy Harris, downloaded the app into her phone. She was able to take a picture of the UPC codes on several packages that I had in my good and bad packaging display. This app instantly told you how green the product was as well as the company that made it. Those of us without a fancy phone can go online for the same information.

New green products?

Papermate is selling biodegradable pencils and retractable pens. The plastic tube is made from Mirel (tm), a bio- plastic made from corn sugar. It has been designed to biodegrade in natural soil and backyard composting bins. It doesn't need the high heat and moisture that is available in commercial composting operations. This writer is a little skeptical about all the parts that are in a retractable pen and if all those parts are biodegradeable.

Frito-Lay is now selling chips in biodegradable bags. These bags are made from PLA (Poly Lactic Acid), a corn-derived plastic that is fully compostable. Their 10.5 ounce package of SunChips® is designed to fully break down in just 14 weeks when placed in a hot, active compost bin or pile; little longer in cooler piles.

Are your taxes done? Before you put all those old records back in the attic, consider coming over to VALCORE for Confidential Paper Shredding. Shredding is held on the third Saturday of each month. April 17 is the next date and the time is 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. There is a charge of \$5 per twenty pounds (maximum: 100 pounds).

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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