

10/3/2011

Hello!

This message is one of a series of environmental messages the Green Team will send out periodically to enlighten, inform, sometimes entertain, and mostly, encourage easy steps you can take to make a difference. Some of the easiest are the most obvious and don't cost a thing: turn things off when they're not being used. Others are a little more involved, but that doesn't mean they're difficult.

Each message will generally have a central focus, along with actions you can take; buying green; legislative efforts; and upcoming environmental events. This message will focus on cars and driving. So this week after the driving tips, there's a bit on making environmentally friendly purchases (without sacrificing quality) and fun and informative environmental events, such as The Late Great Nocturnal Night (10/28/11) and Maple Syrup Tapping Festival (spring) at North Park Nature Center. And don't forget: save the date for the Fall Clean and Green on Saturday 10/15/11!

Enjoy the message, and don't forget to fill up your tires if you take a drive out in the country to view the beautiful fall colors that are just around the corner.

The Green Team

ps-please let us know of any environmental events and any environmental efforts you'd like to share, especially if it involves South Loop School, so any efforts can possibly be combined (e.g. recycling) to prevent duplication of effort and get more accomplished. We'd be happy to share non-South Loop efforts as well, and to promote local businesses (such as Overflow Coffee) that are doing good things for the environment.

Cars and Driving

We all know that cars have a very negative effect on the environment, but it's staggering that the U.S. consumes 28,000 42-gallon barrels of oil *every two minutes*. However, for many (myself included), cars are a necessity. But we can do a lot to minimize the damaging effects (see tips below).

Of course, biking, walking, and taking the train (if/when possible) are excellent ways to eliminate or minimize driving. And for those who can get by without a car, or can get rid of a second car, the financial savings are even greater than the environmental savings: the costs of the car and of insurance, depreciation, city sticker & registration, fuel, and maintenance add up quickly.

What you can do to make a difference (and save money and stress at the same time!):

- When buying a vehicle, consider the environment! Vehicle use has a huge environmental impact, and imported oil costs consumers and businesses billions of dollars a year and hundreds of billions more on defense related expenditures due to dependence on foreign energy expenditures.
- Yahoo's green auto website <http://autos.yahoo.com/green-center/all.html> has a green rating, with mileage of course being the most important factor, and Edmunds.com has a good site too.
- For example, Edmunds currently has a great article titled "Your Fuel Economy Gauge is Lying." <http://www.edmunds.com/fuel-economy> It notes that **a car that gets 25 mpg and goes 15,000 miles a year will cost \$12,000 in 5 years!** That's for a car that gets 25 mpg! That puts fuel economy in perspective. And despite a current dip in prices, it's likely that over 5 years, the price will only get higher.

- A hybrid (or now, all electric) car may cost significantly more up front, but the five-year cost to own and operate of some hybrids is often nearly the same because of the fuel savings. The economics get even better as fuel prices increase.
- Don't forget that SLS is an idle free zone. Take that with you; everywhere should be an idle free zone! If you're going to be stopped for a minute or more, you'll save gas by turning your car off. Idling is not necessary to run a radio or accessories for short durations. If it's cold outside (or hot in the summer), your car will still retain its temperature for a while before you need to turn the car on again to warm up (or cool down) the interior.
- Keep proper tire inflation. Proper inflation not only saves gas, it's safer. Improper inflation wastes gas, speeds tire wear, and can be dangerous due to less effective braking and handling.
- It's an easy habit to get into. Most gas stations sell a pressure gauge for \$2-3. It takes less than 5 minutes (about the same as the time required to fill the tank) to check and fill the tires to the proper pressure, which is usually listed on the driver's side door pillar, or you can also check the owner's manual.
- Combine multiple trips to minimize miles driven (and save time).
- Drive gently! You don't have to be a hyper-miler to have real benefits by driving more gently. It saves not only a significant amount of gas, but also a lot of wear and tear on your engine, brakes, and tires. And just as importantly, it's safer and much less stressful!

Some of the following information will be kept at the end of each message as a resource: great and easy ways to shop green, easy ways to stay updated on environmental legislation. Other information, such as environmental events and places to go will be updated from time to time.

Shop Green

Vote with your pocketbook! It's one of the best ways to have an impact, and not just with your car purchase. Many websites offer good information on more environmentally friendly products. Both of the following sites are really good. Consumer Reports provides rigorous testing on all of its products, and since it doesn't accept advertisements, is a dependent, unbiased source. On Amazon, you can get a lot of excellent customer feedback. Through these (and other websites) you can ensure you're getting a high quality green product and not one that you'll only order once.

<http://www.amazon.com/Amazon-Green/b?ie=UTF8&node=394379011>

<http://www.greenerchoices.org/> is the Consumer Reports website.

Vote for the environment

Stay up to date on important environmental legislation. Get periodic emails that give a brief background on issues and usually the means to make a quick difference by signing a petition and/or sending a quick email to your legislator(s):

The League of Conservation Voters: www.lcv.org

- Through our [National Environmental Scorecard](#) and [Presidential Report Card](#) we inform the public about the most important environmental legislation of the past Congressional session and show them how their own and other representatives voted.
- We run tough and effective campaigns to defeat anti-environment candidates, and support those leaders who stand up for a clean, healthy future for America.

- Out of the more than 1,500 candidates endorsed by LCV and the state LCVs in 2008, a stunning 85% won.

LCV's track record demonstrates our ability to use the democratic process to improve the environment. How much impact can LCV campaigns make on national policy? In a Congress closely divided on the environment, these LCV victories can make all the difference.

Events and places to go, including environmental courses, training, etc.

There are many places to go and experience nature in and near the city, from the gorgeous lakefront to Northerly Island, North Park Nature Center, the Lincoln Park Zoo and Garfield Park Conservatory, the Chicago River (canoeing and kayaking) in the city proper, to large forest preserves immediately surrounding the city, and much more in the greater Chicagoland area.

<http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dae/provdrs/ccgt.html> The Center for Green Technology (CGT), Sacramento and Lake.

CGT has classes for professionals and novices alike, a resource library, and a wonderful self-guided tour. "The Chicago Center for Green Technology is the first rehabilitated municipal building in the nation to receive the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design™ (LEED) Platinum rating by the U.S. Green Building Council. Mayor Richard M. Daley dedicated the building in 2002 and it has since become a national model for sustainable design and technology. The Center serves as the most comprehensive green design and educational resource in the Midwest."

<http://www.foresightdesign.org> Foresight Design Initiative is a great hub for all things, people, and organizations related to sustainability in Chicago. Check out their 'events' tab for lots of events, from training to panel discussions to movies on environmental topics.

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/north-park-village-nature-center-chicago> North Park Nature Center, Pulaski and Peterson.

October 28, 2011: The Late Great Nocturnal Night (10/28/11, 4-8 pm): Learn about and look for wildlife at night in the preserve-raccoons, opossums, skunks, maybe even a flying squirrel. No registration required. Later the same evening there's Campfire Story Time: Enjoy cool evening air, roast marshmallows, and listen to nature stories highlighting scary stories. (6:30-8:00 pm, registration required)

Yelp has some really good descriptive reviews of the Nature Center and its events, such as the Maple Syrup tapping festival, Winter Solstice Party, and more. One example:

"Wonderful little patch of woodland in the city. It's just large enough to support a wealth of life forms, just small enough that you are practically guaranteed to see deer. :) An excellent place to unwind. My toddler loves to watch the wildlife, poke around in the dirt, and generally enjoy the landscape. Very soothing.

The special programs they offer are usually a good bet for a good time too, whether you feel like interacting or just hanging back and observing. Being a long time city dweller I sometimes really, really miss sitting by a bonfire, and the nature center regularly offers me a chance to scratch that itch. The recycling center is also a wonderful addition to the neighborhood."