

Teaching our children the three “Rs”- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – 3/1/07

This column is being initiated and coordinated by the Hingham League of Women Voters, as a public service, to inform the local townspeople of a variety of issues and constructive actions that may be taken to address various environmental concerns.

The following article was contributed by Kate Boland and Elizabeth Fetsko.

It is never too early to educate our children on the value of protecting our natural resources. We are able to decrease the burden on landfills, as well as, protect the environment by practicing the following: reducing waste and consumption; reusing old items and recycling appropriate materials.

Here are some simple ways to involve children in practicing the three R's: reduce, reuse and recycle. Reduce the amount of water used in your home by keeping a pitcher of cold water in the refrigerator rather than having family members waste the water by running it until the water reaches a cool drinking temperature. Another effective way to reduce the amount of water used in your home is to teach children to turn off the water while brushing their teeth. More water is used in the bathroom than any other place in the home. The average total home water use for each person in the U.S. is about 50 gallons a day. So, trying a few water saving habits daily can really add up to a lot of water saved in a year.

Reduce the amount of garbage generated at home by buying beverage and food items in bulk. For example, juice may be purchased in large containers rather than juice boxes. Encourage children to use washable cups at home rather than juice boxes or single serving bottles. Also help children refill re-useable containers for taking beverages on long trips or on outings to the park. Other types of drinks, including sports drinks, can be bought in powder form and mixed with water in reusable containers. Using washable cups and reusable bottles helps to reduce the amount of garbage that ends up in landfills.

Snack food items may also be bought in bulk form to reduce waste. For example, when buying cheese for snacks buy the cheese in block form rather than in slices wrapped individually with plastic. Other “single serving” snacks that can be bought in bulk form include: puddings, cookies and Jell-O. Remind children that using less packaging helps to reduce the amount of garbage that goes into landfills.

Reuse old toys and clothes by helping your children set aside those items which they have outgrown. The toys and clothing can then be donated to non-profit organizations. This way the items end up in local organizations rather than in local landfills.

Reuse the paper from old school assignments and school notices by cutting the paper into quarters and then using the blank backs for writing grocery lists or phone messages or for making bookmarks.

Recycle ordinary household items by keeping an art box handy to add items such as

popsicle sticks, plastic bag wire twists, foam trays, bottle tops, plastic bottles and a myriad of other household items. Your child can then use these items for future “inventions”.

Recycle “food” waste and yard waste by teaching your children about composting. Build a composting box together. Add to the fun by having your youngster dig for worms to turn into the soil.

These are just a few simple ways to involve children in Earth - friendly practices. There are many more creative ways to involve children in practicing the three “R”s (reduce, reuse, recycle). Discovering new ways to reduce, reuse and recycle can be a fun learning experience for the whole family. Remember that it is important to recycle, however, it is slowing consumption that really makes a difference.

The league welcomes input and information on any issues of “Green Concern” and invites you to contact us through e-mail at greencorner@hingham.ma.lwvnet.org. For membership information go to www.hingham.ma.lwvnet.org.