

“Green Teens: An Adolescent’s Guide to Becoming a Hero for Mother Earth”

By Cole Zernich

“Coastline States Threatened by Rising Sea Levels due to Global Warming”-- “Water Pollution the Cause of Extinction of Rare Fish Species”-- “Thousands of Miles of Rainforest Destroyed by Clear Cutting” Such headlines are becoming more and more proliferous in American newspapers today. Although our future may seem bleak, there is a new generation of individuals that have been born into this millennium with a keen sense of planetary awareness and a passion to help save our Galactic Mother. I like to refer to this heroic generation as the “Green Teens.” Although many of today’s adolescents have a passion for helping the planet, it is also true that many haven’t a clue as to where to begin. With all of the hype about things like “solar paneling for housing” and “bio-diesel hybrid car engines”, many teens have the impression that going green is not only inconvenient and time consuming, but also highly expensive. This is certainly not the case, and everybody, teens and otherwise, can make simple changes for the betterment of our wondrous planet. Even minute changes to lifestyle, diet, and awareness can make marked differences. So slap on your thinking caps, and let me suggest how you may transform from an unaware, consumerist teenager into a super powered (but always efficient!) Green Teen.

The first steps in the transformation process from oblivious teen into Green Teen are a few simple lifestyle changes, all of them low cost and none of them difficult. First off, it is vital that every Green Teen reduce one’s use of plastic. Existing in the Pacific Ocean is a massive, swirling vortex of noxious refuse that spans an area *twice the size of Texas*. This gross gyre, appropriately named the Pacific Garbage Dump, is where disgusting amounts of plastic wind up after it has been used and tossed out. Then, the plastics are likely to be consumed by unsuspecting marine life, having a hugely detrimental effect on the sensitive marine ecosystem. A great way to be conservative in your use of plastic is to bring cloth bags to stores rather than use the plastic ones provided, and don’t bag produce. Simply wash it once you are home rather than wasting plastic. More obvious steps

can be taken to reduce your consumption of water and energy. Keeping conscious about the amount of water you use during the day and awareness about how much electricity you burn will help you to remember to conserve our precious resources. So, always remember to turn out the lights when you leave a room, and turn off the faucet while brushing your teeth!

Another fantastic way to be a Green Gaian Super Teen is to dine consciously. Raising animals for food- i.e. for meat, eggs, or dairy- is the *number one* cause of greenhouse gasses in the environment today. Factory farms manufacture more pollution than cars, planes, ships, and trains *combined!* Although switching to a vegan or vegetarian dietary regime is optimal for the healthy and vigorous green teen, I realize that this isn't practical or healthy for everyone. Reducing the amount of animal products in our diet however, is likely one of the most powerful things that you can do for our planet. Another way to green your regime is to stop buying bottled water, as not only is tap water free, but it's also been proven to be just as pure.

Ultimately, the metamorphosis from uninformed teen to Green Teen occurs with a fine-tuning in the awareness of the individual. It is an inner change yielding outer results. It is a state of contentment with that which you already possess rather than being pulled into the consumerist trap that because it's the latest, it's the greatest, as advertisers would attempt to promote. And it is a state of love and gratitude for the planet that supports our very existence. We are teenagers in the new millennium. Now is the time for us to question the conventions of society. We are tomorrow's adults. We are tomorrow's presidents, senators, doctors, and teachers. The fate of the planet is in our hands. Will we continue to follow the current trend of selfishness and consumerism? Or will we step out of the mold and take a brave new stand against the destruction of our Mother Earth? Will we remain in the shadows of ignorance, or will we make the choice to ascend into awareness? Will we be the Green Generation? The choice is ours.