

July 2009

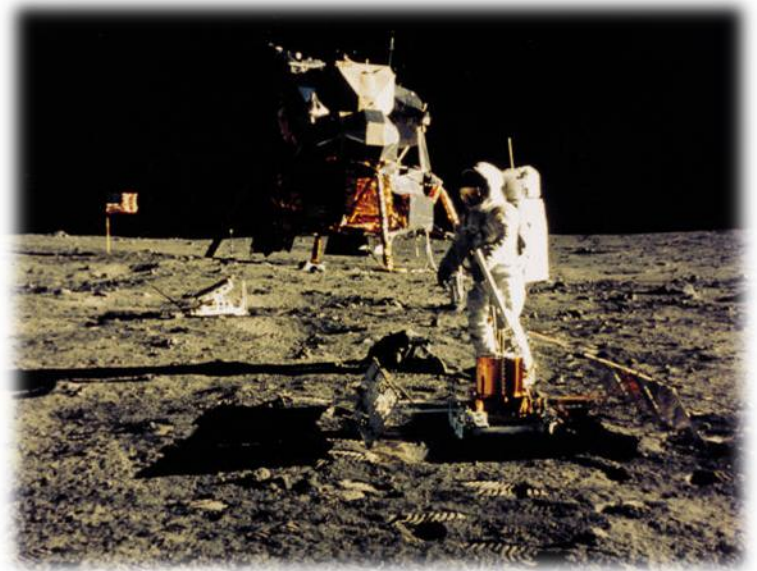
"That's one small step for man, a giant leap for mankind."

- Neil Armstrong, astronaut on the first Moon landing

The Joys of Going Green

Kermit the Frog must be having a field day with all the talk about recycling and going green lately. More people are taking steps to help the environment, and I've already heard of green buildings, cars, weddings, realtors, products, etc.

The importance of recycling became very evident to me during our first two Computer E-Recycling Drives we had at MD Anderson for personal computers. In January, our first Computer Recycling Drive netted nearly five tons of computers, printers, and monitors. We saw the early Macs, those rectangle boxes with tiny little screens, and we marveled at how big the monitors used to be just a few years ago. The times change quickly. The second Computer Recycling Drive for Earth Day brought in another four tons of computers. Because of the two drives, we kept nine tons of computers out of the landfill. That's amazing.



I realized there was a reason we received so many computers. No one knew what to do with an old computer so they kept it. Literally for decades. They heard it was bad to go in the landfill so they held onto it. Add in a dash of worry about someone stealing your identity or wondering if you might need a part someday, and you have dead computers taking up lots of space.

People have no fear about recycling newspapers but can become paralyzed about recycling magazines, computers, old TV's, and other stuff. They're still "good" in their eyes so someone somewhere might need it someday. Or if it's broken, maybe someone can fix it. It's time to let all that thinking go and send those items out your door to the proper place. When I've watched organizing shows on TV, I've seen hoarders who kept tons of things in order "to recycle" but never did. The stuff stays in the garage or house, stacking up and up into dangerous mountains of garbage. If you don't recycle the things you're keeping for recycling, then you're NOT recycling. You're hoarding.

Going green is still relatively new for we Americans. In other countries, it's been a way of life. Japan, who has the lowest carbon emissions per capita than other Western countries, has strict rules and laws about recycling. A recent visitor to Japan told me the country has 80 something different categories of recycling, and most of us can't even seem to get the Sunday paper into a recycle bin. We need TV ads reminding people not to mess with

Texas or keep America beautiful. Who remembers the ad with the American Indian Chief with a solitary tear running down his cheek as he saw the countryside littered with trash?

So what's in it for you to go green? We're all citizens of our respective cities, counties, states, and countries, but we can't forget that we're all citizens of Planet Earth as well. Without the planet, no countries, states, counties, or cities would exist. Going green can even impact your taxes. The federal government is offering tax credits for homeowners making energy efficient home improvements. For more information, check out the government's website at: http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=tax_credits.tx_index.

What it gets down to is personal responsibility. We decide and choose to recycle. It's our planet, and we do need to show some responsibility for cleaning up the daily mess we're leaving behind. Speaking for myself, I've been more of a rabid consumer of the planet's resources than anything else. I could have recycled long before my apartment put in the new recycling dumpster this year and taken it to the recycling centers myself, but I didn't. No matter where I live now, I will recycle, even if that means taking it somewhere myself. It makes me feel like I'm doing something. It's one tiny step in the right direction.

Our apartment recycling dumpster is for paper, plastic and glass. After seeing what other people tossed into the bin, I realized all the items that can be recycled:

- The plastic part of my disposable contact lens packaging. I noticed the tiny "recycle triangle" on it.
- The plastic trays frozen foods or take out comes in. Tuck these trays into the dishwasher and then toss them into recycling since they're too flimsy to use again. Use the take out trays to bring your lunch to work or to send leftovers home after parties.
- Boxes for cereal, cookies, and frozen dinners can be recycled as long as there is no food on them. Pull out the plastic bag in the cereal box and recycle the box.
- Paper and cardboard packaging that comes with products, pens, and toys.
- Rinse out milk and juice bottles before recycling. If the jar lid is big enough – such as peanut butter jars, stick it in the dishwasher. Narrower bottles may require a bottle brush to clean it.

Other recycling tips:

- Bring your hangers back to the drycleaner to reuse.
- Use cloth shopping bags at the grocery store or other discount stores versus using plastic bags. Forgetting mine in the trunk most of the time, I finally put a label on my coupon carrier that says, "Bags in the trunk" as a reminder.
- Send e-cards instead of regular cards to friends and family. Regular cards are usually required for children, people who don't use computers, and special occasions when an e-card would be deemed too informal. Don't send an e-card for an anniversary or Valentine's Day. You've been warned.
- Have clothes, shoes and jewelry you no longer want? Have a swap party with friends. Everyone brings over items they no longer want, and people trade. Change up your wardrobe on the cheap.
- Before donating books or magazines, check with the hospital, school or company and make sure they will accept the donation. Some organizations only accept current magazines, and some schools only accept new school supplies over used ones for their classrooms and school supply programs.
- Fill unused conference bags from conferences gone by with unused personal care items, and donate them to homeless or women's shelters.
- Repurpose items. A small flower pot or festive coffee mug can become a pen holder on a desk. A tissue box can hold a bunch of plastic bags that you collected before switching to the cloth bags. Shoeboxes can do a multitude of things:
 - Sort socks and other small pieces of clothing in dresser drawers.
 - Hold craft items, crayons, markers and other supplies.
 - Become a treasure chest for small children with a little bit of contact paper, wrapping paper or plain butcher paper.
 - Become mail sorters for the family.
 - Serve as a drawer divider.
- Reuse plastic bags for smaller trash cans, packing in boxes, holding wet bathing suits at the beach, etc.

- Use a reusable water bottle or coffee mug instead of plastic water bottles or paper ones.
- Unplug small appliances such as hair dryers, phone chargers, and coffee pots to reduce your energy usage.

You don't have to be perfect when it comes to going green. I'm far from being the perfect environment-friendly citizen. Sometimes I forget the grocery bags or leave the hair dryer plugged in. I do what I can and try my best. That's all we can ask for of ourselves on anything. Happy Recycling!

Helpful Products

Create a Writing Space. Chalkboard and Dry Erase Wallies. These removable and repositionable vinyl sheets can create either a chalkboard or a dry erase board wherever you need one. Put a dry erase one on the refrigerator to write down needed grocery items, or slap one on a space where the family frequents to leave notes. Two sheets sell for \$9.95 on Organized A to Z. The dry erase and chalkboard wallies are sold in separate packages.

Organizing Medical Information. If you want to organize your health and medical information, pick up your personal HealthChart from OrganizedHealth. There are binders for you, your children, and even your pets. Created by a physician, the HealthChart puts all of your information at your fingertips. The binders are only available via the website.

Got Clutter? I have developed 30 minute and 45 minute presentations on organizing, time management, and productivity. Longer workshops are available upon request. Moving to a new building? I also have a 30-minute presentation on preparing for a move for your department. I also do one-on-one sessions in your office and help you come up with a solution to your organizing problems. To schedule a presentation or a one-on-one appointment, call 713-792-8061 or email jsimon@mdanderson.org. **For past newsletters, click [here](#).** Follow me on Twitter! Look up JaniceSimon. For Facebook, look for Janice M. Simon. My personal blog is: www.theclutterprincess.com.

Happy Organizing!

Janice

Links

Chalkboard Wallies: <http://www.organizedatoz.com/Wallies-Peel-and-Stick-Chalkboard-p/537.htm>

Dry Erase Wallies: <http://www.organizedatoz.com/Wallies-Peel-and-Stick-Dry-Erase-p/538.htm>

OrganizedHealth: <http://organized-health.com/index.html>

Past newsletters: <http://www.mdanderson.org/education-and-research/education-and-training/faculty-development/professional-and-career-development/getting-organized-previous-issues.html>