



SHERRY NOIK-BENT

# Make every day Earth Day

The 'green' journey begins with small steps

I didn't do anything in particular to mark Earth Day this year, and here's why.

My condo breaks all the rules of good ecocitizenship. When it was built about eight years ago, very few people had ever heard of low-flow toilets or HRV (heat recovery ventilation) units, Energy Star appliances or motion-sensor-controlled common areas. At that time, Al Gore was best known for losing an election he'd won. And Ed Begley Jr., in town this week for the Green Living Show, was still considered a freak for his eco-warrior ways. (No one's laughing now, Ed. Or Al.)

So I was astounded, on a visit to Turkey in 2006, to note that every house in every remote, rural hillside village had a couple of solar panels affixed to its roof and a hot-water tank perched above. It wasn't long before I realized that this is not out of some hippie-dippy love of the environment, it's a simple matter of infrastructure. Stringing a state-of-the-art hydro network through these millennia-old hills, with their densely packed homes, is not feasible. Where lines do exist, they are outdated and patchwork. The result is that hydro is notoriously unreliable in these parts. In fact, the very morning we had to wake early for an excursion, the power failed. In the wee-hours darkness, we were brushing our teeth by cell phone light.

In the quasi-Mediterranean climate of Turkey, a supplement of solar power is the norm, not the exception. We in North America have yet to catch up to this ancient country.

I was thinking about all this in the run-up to Earth Day this past week. Concern over the environment has – you may have noticed – taken on an urgency and an earnestness of late. It's such a huge issue that can seem overwhelming. I looked around my place and wondered what I could do to live more consciously and carefully on the earth. I mean, in this very section I have run dozens of articles and tip sheets about how to green the home in ways large and small. I previously covered green building, decor and lifestyle for other publications. It's something that is very personal to me and has been ever since I watched my first episode of *The Nature of Things* as a child.

So, despite the fact that the builders of my condo couldn't anticipate a future world where residents cared about these things, there are a number of measures I have taken to reduce my environmental footprint. (And, yes, I realize that "friending" David Suzuki

on Facebook doesn't count.)

All my light bulbs are CFLs (compact fluorescents). If you haven't heard of these, you've obviously been living in the dark. I took those coupons that came with my Toronto Hydro bill and collected a couple of free bulbs, then bought some more. That was two years ago. They're still burning – but only when they need to be, because very few lights are required while I'm at home. The foyer light goes on when someone arrives, then goes back off after their coat is hung and they've come in. The kitchen light goes on when I go in to grab a snack, then goes back off. You get the idea.

Same goes for water. Despite the fact that my building is bulk charged for water, I do the shut-off thing while soaping, scrubbing, brushing and so on. (Turn to page 34 for an article on the Go Blue campaign to conserve water.)

Chargers for all my gadgets are all neatly wrapped and stowed in a basket until required, not plugged into the wall and draining power.

I switched from a PC with multiple peripherals (all energy-sucking even when not on) to a wireless laptop with built-in everything.

For cleaning, I've dispensed with all the toxic products that used to fill my cupboard and gone with one good all-purpose green brand that works for almost every job. I also have an eco-friendly natural-enzyme pet stain remover for those little incidents on the carpet – and, I have to say, it works better than any of the 600 conventional brands I tried previously.

Finally, as soon as the warm weather hit last week, the thermostat went up a few notches, and it stays that way throughout the workday, while no one is home but the cats.

Small measures, all of these. So small, in fact, I had a hard time making up this list – they've all so effortlessly become second-nature.

Even so, I'm always looking for more ways to be a good eco-citizen. That's why you can be sure I'll be at the Green Living Show this weekend, endeavouring to find new (and easy) steps to green my lifestyle. (See article to the right for the full story.)

You might say, in my world, every day is Earth Day.

*Sherry Noik-Bent is the editor of New Homes & Condominiums. E-mail her at sherry.noik-bent@sunmedia.ca.*



## HOME, GREEN HOME

# President Clinton headlines Green Living Show

It's his former VP that is perhaps best known for environmental advocacy. Nonetheless, former president Bill Clinton is no slouch when it comes to raising awareness about global issues. One of his foundation's projects is the Clinton Climate Initiative, whose mission is to apply a business-oriented approach to combatting climate change.

Clinton heads a marquee roster of speakers at this weekend's Green Living Show at the Direct Energy Centre, Exhibition Place. Other guest speakers are Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Jean-Michel Cousteau, Michael "Pinball" Clemons and Ed Begley Jr.

The second annual show, organizers promise, is bigger, better and greener than ever.

It's "the ultimate event to help consumers green up their lives."

The show is double the size of last year's event, with more than 300 eco-friendly exhibitors showcasing the latest "greenovations" and an even larger roster of special guests.

The range of exhibitors, live presentations and seminars will enable visitors to immerse themselves in every aspect of green living.

"The success of last year's inaugural Green Living Show proved that Canadians are truly dedicated to embracing sustainable and healthy lives," says Laurie Simmonds, president and CEO of Green Living Enterprises, which is presenting the show.

"Based on this incredible public response, we felt compelled to push the green envelope further in 2008 by expanding the show and offering hundreds more ideas, solutions and products that will empower our guests to go green with ease."

Toronto's TAS DesignBuild, a major player in the green building movement in this city, hosts the Bringing Green Home booth – a 3,000-square-foot interactive exhibit where homeowners and home buyers can learn about sustainable building practices.

Debuting at the show is the CANUhome, a one-of-a-kind sustainable house composed of eco-friendly structural materials, furniture and appliances.

DIYers and decor mavens can check out a range of green renovation and home furnishing companies.

In addition, show organizers say visitors will be enlightened and entertained by experts in the fields of energy, transportation, environmental education, home and garden, eco-fashion, food and beverage, health and wellness, eco-tourism and recreation, green business and more.

The main stage will play host to experts who'll speak about the latest green ideas and initiatives and motivate visitors to lessen their environmental footprint. The film and video festival *Planet in Focus* will showcase a series of documentaries, fea-

tures and shorts on the ecology.

The Bike Feature allows cycling enthusiasts to participate in two-wheel test drives, watch expert demonstrations by the likes of professional mountain biker Ryan Leech and attend presentations covering all aspects of cycling.

The Yoga Stage will offer live demonstrations and mats for visitors to participate in mini classes.

President's Choice and The Home depot showcase their lines of environmentally friendly products.

The Green Living Kids Zone features live performances, child-focused films, activities, live animals and reptiles and youth yoga.

The Urban Forest will provide expert planting project advice.

The Test, Ride and Drive exhibit gives visitors a chance to try out battery, hybrid and fuel-cell electric vehicles.

Eco-fashion exhibitors will showcase a wide range of green clothes and accessories.

Visitors can also explore eco-travel options in the Eco-Tourism and Recreation area.

The Art of Nature fundraising exhibit and sale will feature Canadian art inspired by the natural world.

Visitors can shop for groceries at the Organic Marketplace and enjoy organic beverages in the Wine and Spirits Lounge.

For more information visit [www.greenlivingshow.ca](http://www.greenlivingshow.ca).

-Sun Media staff



Michael "Pinball" Clemons (top) and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (above) are both appearing at this weekend's Green Living Show.