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Green Giving for Green Living

I am very much enjoying the new World Wildlife Fund (WWF) commercials on television. The commercials show how the WWF understands the correlation between global warming and the current situation of the world's wildlife - illness and dwindling populations of species, and even extinction. This organization, like many others, works tirelessly everyday doing research, advocacy and education on environmental issues that ultimately affect us all.

If you are like me, you sometimes think about what more you can do to help the environment. You recycle, you compost, you buy local, and so on. Yet you wonder if it is enough. However, not everyone has the time, aspiration, or resources of the WWF to act on behalf of the environment 24/7.

I subscribe to a number of environmental newsletters and try to stay informed on what environmental groups and organizations are up to. Groups such as the WWF, the David Suzuki Foundation, the Sierra Club of Canada, and the Conservation Council of New Brunswick provide an incredible amount of information too keep one current on environmental topics and issues. These groups are able to do what I am not: tackle the big issues; conduct ongoing environmental research; influence government policy; inform and educate. It is for that reason that last year I chose to start a monthly donation plan to an environmental organization.

If you don't have the money in your budget to start a donation plan, there are other ways you can give financially to environmental and green organizations – ways that benefit both you and the environment. There are several types of “green” or “ethical” funds available on the market. If you are thinking of, or are already investing your money in mutual funds, you may or may not have thought about where the fund monies are being allocated. Why do so much at home to help the environment and cut down on your own carbon emissions, only to invest in companies that are compounding the problem? For example, the informed and environmentally-conscious investor will choose to invest in renewable energy and stay away from companies with poor environmental track records.

Another investment/contribution idea for the environmentally conscious is to purchase carbon offsets. Though I'm not an expert, I do know that offsetting programs are becoming quite popular. It is a very simple concept – for a (usually low) fee you buy off the CO₂ you are expending. This money then goes into green projects (e.g. tree planting, renewable energy, etc.) as a means of “offsetting” the emissions. Think of it as counteracting or balancing out the carbon being emitted into the atmosphere through your lifestyle choices and activities – such as air travel. Since the launch of their program in May 2007, Air Canada reports collecting nearly \$70,000 in carbon offsets (equivalent to 4369 tonnes of CO₂ emissions) and have used the money to plant 874 trees in a forest restoration project in British Columbia. Trees capture carbon (called a carbon sink) – so the more trees the more carbon that's captured versus going into the atmosphere.

In Fredericton we now have an opportunity to invest in our community's environment right here at home. The Fredericton Community Foundation launched a Green Fund in 2007 and beginning in 2008 the Fund will begin funding worthy environment-related projects in our city. The fund is being seeded now. What this means is – perhaps it is the perfect time for you or your company to contribute to greening your environment right here in your own backyard. I call it green giving for green living!

Valerie Hillier is a Frederictonian who continually looks for ways to challenge herself to do more for the health of our planet. Want to invest in 'green'? Contact the Fredericton Community Foundation at 454-2262 or fredfdn.info@nb.aibn.com