



# The Daily Gleaner

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## **Taking Initiative, Taking Action**

The other day on CBC Information Morning Fredericton, host Terry Seguin read an email from a listener who wrote in responding to an interview about milk cartons being thrown in the garbage rather than being recycled at a local school. I applaud the person who wrote in. She said she sympathized with the parent from the school because last year upon noticing the same problem in her children's school, she took on the project of collecting all the milk cartons and other recyclable plastics from her school's cafeteria. She collected them everyday, took them home, rinsed them and put them in her residential blue box. WOW!

I have a friend who has been doing this same chore at his workplace for the past couple of years. The amount of cardboard and plastics in his workplace is significant. He began by making a presentation to colleagues about everything that could be recycled instead of going into the trash. He then arranged for recycling bins to be brought into their office and he alerted the cleaning staff about the new plan. At present, Fredericton Region Solid Waste Commission (FRSWC) offers a Recycle @ Work program for grey boxes (paper products recycling), but as of yet no program exists for blue box items (e.g. plastics, tins), so he picks them up regularly from the office and puts them in his own blue bins at home.

I'm the kind of person who thinks that if you are going to complain about something, first have a solution to back it up. These individuals obviously acted on this motto – they recognized that something needed to be done; they took initiative and led by example.

Going back to my Top 5 list for 2009 (see [www.greenmattersfredericton.ca](http://www.greenmattersfredericton.ca) under Green Matters in the Gleaner, Valerie Hillier), number 2 on the list is: *be more active by taking action*. I was speaking with someone from a local business a couple of weeks ago who said all the recyclable bottles collected on their premises are donated to local non-profits who then return them for refund at one of the city's depots.

These types of hands-on actions may be daunting if you work for a large organization or in an office building. So if it is more than you are able to take on yourself, maybe you can partner with others in your company or building. I suggest finding a 'green champion' in each department or on each office floor, and with their help create a Green Committee. Work together to move forward in a coordinated manner when discussing your plans with other staff members. You may also find others willing to take recyclables home or find some local non-profit groups to partner with. If you bring this way of thinking into all the organizations you are involved with, you will truly be making significant environmental change in your community.

Many readers may be saying, “this sounds like a lot of work” or “what happens when the key people leave the organization or no longer have the time or energy to lead the project”. This is why I strongly believe in using your voice as well as your energy. Also on my Top 5 list was writing to your government representatives - local, provincial or federal, depending on the issue. Though, as citizens, we should always expect to take on some of the work and responsibility from time to time, we also need to let our public representatives know what is important to us and where we see shortfalls in environmental policy. Take the time to write a letter, send an e-mail, or call your local Councillor, Mayor, MLA or MP with your concerns and potential solutions.

In the spirit of personal action, one of my favourite quotes is from Gandhi: “You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result.”

*Valerie Hillier is a Frederictonian who believes in personal environmental action for a better community. If you have comments, ideas or topics you would like to see the Green Matters writers explore please e-mail [greenmatters@fredericton.ca](mailto:greenmatters@fredericton.ca).*