

Coconut Telegraph

January 2010
Volume 4 Issue #37

Prestige Publishing, Inc
101425 Overseas Highway
PMB #628
Key Largo, FL 33037

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Deadline

for the
Coconut Telegraph's
February issue is
Monday
January 25, 2010

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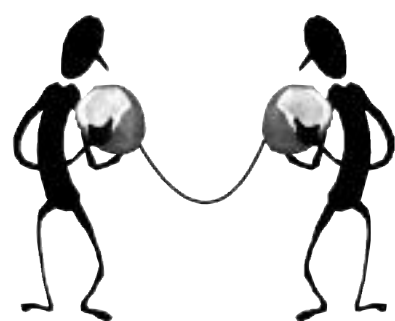
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Articles

Green Resolutions for 20103
 Flutie to Perform at Billfish Bowl.....4
 Business Spotlight: Flagler's Folly4
 Stone Crab & Seafood Festival5
 Two Upper Keys Businesses Get Green Certified6
 Freecycling in the Keys7
 Artist of the Month, Morna Strengholt8
 Knowing Better Now: Past in Light of the Present9
 Bartender of the Month, D.J. Soares11
 Getting from Here to There- map page12
 Local Team Wins Sailing Distance Race14
 Entertainer of the Month, Lenore Troia.....16
 Conch Characters.....17
 Word Search: Sustainability in 201019
 When a Book is More Than a Book20
 Business in the Keys21
 New! Classified Ads22
 Coco 'Nut' Funnies23

Guest Editor Karen Beal

Editorial: Everything Old is New Again

The media is pushing a story about in emails from scientists accused of manipulating information and public perception of global warming. I'll admit, these allegations are worrisome, but I started wondering: If it all turns out to be bunk, and humans have no effect on the planets health, how would that information change my way of life?

In 1980 my husband and I decided to build a home here in the Keys. We are not builders by trade and we were on the bottom rungs of the economic ladder. It was quite an undertaking for us and took many years to complete. But, even back then we took pains to design a passive cooling system, to turn the house and roof angles to catch the sun for future solar panels. We devised a multi-layered water conservation system. We researched and learned and built, not motivated by global warming but motivated to conserve resources and money - the equivalent of our own energy, if you will, since we had to work to pay the bills.

Today we compost and grow veggies in rich, fertile soil of our own making. I'm happy to have fewer bags and less smelly trash to haul out thanks to composting. I'm thrilled to be staking my tomato plants at the six foot mark on the trellis.

I've always had fun making useful things out of 'stuff' around the house - today they would call it recycling. I just thought I was innovative and thrifty. I buy our work clothes at the second hand store and drop off items as well. I often hang my clothes to dry and we have always shopped locally whenever possible.

And, of course, my husband and I are not alone. Maybe it is part of being an island community. Many people make the lifestyle choices that are now labeled "green" for a multitude of reasons. I believe those choices are good for the planet, global warming or no global warming. I know those choices have been good for me. I hope you will find inspiration in this issue of The Coconut Telegraph that will make life better, easier and greener.

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Green Resolutions for 2010

Begin January with resolutions to live "greener" in simple ways in 2010. And as an added bonus, by making green choices at the grocery store, around the home and in the world, one can live healthier and lose pounds, lessen pollution and even save money! Pick one a month and explore the possibilities.

Recycle much more than you throw away. Learn what your recycling rules are for your community.

Simply buy less. Ask yourself if you really need this consumer item or not. Lighten expenditures and relieve stress. And when you DO buy, use our local businesses.

Choose the recycled napkins, toilet paper, paper towels and even printer paper when possible. Consider using dish towels in the kitchen more often or cloth napkins at the table.

Doing laundry? Keep the water clean too, look for biodegradable soap and safer laundry products. Powdered soap is a good option on several counts and now dissolves in cold water.

Try organic/fair trade coffee. You can find choices at the stores and they promote less clearing of forests for shade-grown coffee as well as a fair wage for the farmer.

Less is more at the landfill.

Buy packaging-heavy goods in bulk to save on garbage. Look for paper wrap or cardboard, rather than plastic packaging. If you have a packaging-heavy product that is a "must have", write or call the manufacturer and tell them to lighten up on the packaging. They may even reward you with a coupon for caring about their product.

Create a rain barrel to collect the run off from your roof. It is better for the plants and saves you on the water bill and sewage charge. Monroe County Coop Extension can tell you how!

Live near a weekend farmer's market? Shop there and bring canvas bags for your goodies.

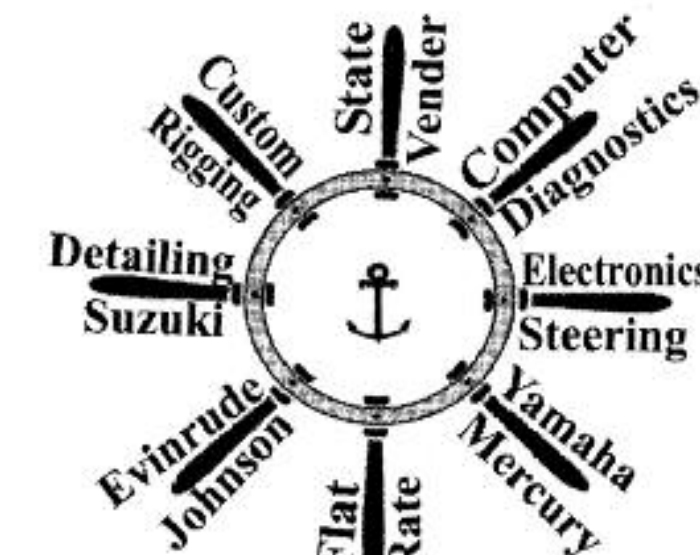
Start a community garden and make a place for children and elders to work and share the low-tech joy of gardening.

Black gold - Turn coffee grounds and salad waste into rich-soil producing compost. Monroe County Coop Extension can tell you how!

Save on your electric bill with a FREE energy audit from Florida Keys Electric Coop - just give them a call.

Bar-be-que more often rather than using the stove. It produces fewer harmful emissions and will not heat up your house, which you then have to cool.

Continued on page 15...



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