

Energy: Its Kids making the Change

When a friend of mine who consults in the field of energy savings handed me a wheel that warned me to switch to efficient appliances and turn off lights, I quipped that the only way to really make a difference is to give it to our kids instead of us.

Why kids you ask? Sure, it would be great if they turned out the lights after blazing a trail through different rooms in the house, leaving it lit up like a Christmas tree night after night. But they are not the ones purchasing appliances and making decisions to buy energy efficient light bulbs, are they? They are not the ones buying SUVs or building big houses that consume substantial heat just to get to 60. So, why kids?

For one, I believe that most of us adults are too set in our ways and have too much going on what with taking our kids to piano and soccer and ballet and gym and having to feed them at the same time, to bother about any of this, unless it hits us directly and substantially in the pocket book. Sure, if we are heading to buy an appliance anyway, given two equal choices we will pick up the energy efficient one, but if it doesn't quite fit in our decor we may not.

Secondly, kids rule. And if by fortune we happen to have a shining bulb for a kid, and we are smart, we try not to undermine them when they come up with bright ideas, or adopt smart philosophies.

Kids lap up all they hear, especially if it comes from sources that they trust, such as their school. My son's friend Jeremy was so inspired when his school talked about protecting the environment and saving energy in his sixth grade class about a year ago, that to this day he regularly dusts the back of their refrigerator. Jeremy was also significantly instrumental in making his parents purchase the most energy efficient car that he could research. In the face of a thoughtful kid like that, would you go buy a suburban?

Yes, kids influence all our current and future decisions. And so they should, given the fragile environment we are about to bequeath to them. It's high time we gave some of the charge for making such decisions to those whose future is at stake, especially since our decisions for some time now, have adopted the trend of convenience rather than wisdom. Or maybe I should say the trend of monkey see, monkey do, type greed.

How else does one explain the domino effect of stock markets around the world, each falling one behind the other? How else does one explain a sub prime mortgage crisis happening not just in one country but in many? Everything spreads. Today it just spreads faster. Ideas, environmentalism, greed, sub primes...everything is up for grabs in today's global society. We adults choose through greed and cynicism, but kids choose through simple, maybe even simplistic, wisdom. Look where our choices have led us!

Maybe the most optimistic thought I have today is that we still have choices; Energy efficient appliances and cars, possibility of a greener environment and Obama. As kids chant Obama for President in our liberal democratic bastion of the greater Portland area, I feel hopeful, and yet cautious.

The man has risen solely on his mettle. How easy is that in this country's politics today? He has battled many months of debates within his own party's primaries and now has also stood his ground against McCain-Palin attacks, which to be truthful are quite ridiculous. But what makes me feel optimistic, is that as a nation we have finally begun to look at more than just the color of the skin, more than the sound of a name.

And yet, can we hope for so much from a man who is destined to inherit fireballs of Iraq, wall street and climate change the day he makes it into office? Yes, despite McCain's guarantees of winning the election I have to believe that it is Obama who will happen. And for the sake of children like Jeremy who may be painting Obama signs to put on their front lawns, I hope that the White House is not his final goal, but just a beginning to back our world from the edge of disaster.