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A BUSINESSDAY PUBLICATION

February 15, 2008



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Posted to the web on: 04 August 2007

Saving the planet — one bag at a time

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I HAVE spent the past week curled up in the foetal position, suffering from a rather nasty bout of gastro. The funny thing about being sick is that it actually gives you time to think. Not just about how you're going to get from the fridge to the couch and back again without collapsing, but about more existential questions. Such as why am I here? What is my purpose in life? And how am I ever going to afford a pair of Jimmy Choos?

So between bouts of delirium brought on by fever, I did some thinking about the environment and what's happening to it. It seems to have become very fashionable to be concerned about global warming and the destruction of the planet. Everywhere I look, celebrities are urging the public to do what they can to conserve energy.

Salma Hayek and Jake Gyllenhaal were reported to have gone to the Arctic to learn more about the effects of global warming on the Inuit people. And "smart climate solutions" are being punted through high-profile initiatives such as the Red Carpet/Green Cars Oscars campaign, where celebrities arrive at the Academy Awards in fuel-efficient vehicles instead of gas-guzzling limousines.

Buzzwords such as "carbon footprint", "climate sensitivity" and (take a deep breath) "anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations" abound.

According to scientists, if we don't change our habits, a rise in global temperatures is expected, which will cause other changes, including the rise of sea levels and an increase in the intensity of extreme weather events.

Other effects include changes in agricultural yields, glacier retreat, species extinctions and increases in the ranges of disease vectors.

After reading all about this I became convinced that my gastro bug was one of these mutant disease vectors and that I should probably start doing something for the environment, since it had hit home in such a personal way.

According to the World Wildlife Fund, we can all start doing things to help reduce our carbon footprint and slow down global warming.

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Here are a couple of ideas I think are quite good:

n Turn off equipment such as televisions and stereos when you're not using them. That little red standby light means they're still using power — and that means a contribution to global warming.

n Send e-greetings instead of paper cards.

n Don't buy bottled water if you know your tap water is safe — transporting water from its source to the supermarket shelves is an expensive waste of energy. And the plastic and glass bottles add to the already high mountains of rubbish we produce.

n Collect rainwater to water your flowers.

n Buy the most energy-efficient household appliances that you can afford.

Another suggestion I would like to add is that when you buy your next handbag, make sure it's an eco-friendly one.

Carbon D'Affreeque, based in Fourways, is a company that takes the notion of global warming and planet destruction very seriously. Their motto, "Saving the planet, one handbag at a time" just tickled my fancy and appealed to the retail goddess inside me.

Carbon D'Affreeque's handbag range is made from recycled PVC billboard skins, which are saved from being incinerated or dumped into landfills. The prices range from R50-R800 and their styles are quite fabulous. My favourite is the Lucy handbag — it's a

well-sized, semi-square bag with a deep base and narrow top, which is ideal for lugging around the 5kg of junk that I have to have with me all the time.

Carbon D'Affreeque say they don't have a showroom since the popularity of their bags has proven there is almost no need for one. They fly out of the warehouse faster than Paris Hilton can say "spank me" and are in such demand that the range has been updated to include new offerings.

I think these bags are ideal — you can feel you are doing something to prevent global warming, while looking fabulously stylish. It's the dieter's equivalent to a fat-free chocolate cake. Hmm, talking about chocolate cake, I think it might be time to see if I can stomach one.

<http://www.carbonfree.co.za>

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