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Reduce, reuse, recycle *Adlen Robinson; Columnist*

While I am certainly not perfect, I thought I was doing a pretty good job when it comes to "going green."

I use reusable grocery bags (except when I forget and leave them in the car or at home).

I haven't bought bottled water in years and admonish my husband and children when they forget to bring water when we are out and they want to buy some.

I can make a roll of paper towels last an eternity.

I try not to buy paper plates often.

I have been turning the water off while I brush my teeth since Barney the dinosaur first sang that irritating song so many years ago.

I run around behind my children, turning off lights and echoing the words my dad always said when I was growing up: "When you have to pay the bills, you'll start turning off the lights."

And I take lightning-fast showers to make up for the long and leisurely ones our teenagers enjoy.

All of that back-patting I just did is mindless banter when I compare myself to my new friend, Denise Carleton, one of the founders of Reaping Nature Productions.

I recently heard Denise speak at an event and suddenly felt like my efforts to **reduce** waste and help the environment were pitiful at best.

Like a walking encyclopedia of all things involving waste reduction, Denise rattled off one startling fact after another about just what goes into a landfill and how long, if ever, it takes to decompose.

Denise packs a lot of information into a little talk too. She speaks with clarity and conviction - her passion about this topic is inspiring to say the least.

Because she's from New Jersey, she also packs a lot of words into just a few minutes.

A few facts I learned from Denise include:

- 80 percent of Americans have access to facilities that **recycle** plastics, but just one out of every four plastic bottles are actually recycled.
- By recycling one ton of paper, we can save 17 trees?
- Within 60 days, an aluminum can is recycled and back on a grocer's shelves.

- Glass can be recycled over and over again.

- Recycling gives people jobs, which of course helps our economy while helping the environment. It's really a win-win for all of us.

Denise and her friend, Mary Nix, formed their nonprofit organization because they feel so strongly about educating our children about waste reduction.

To them, protecting our environment is something each and every one of us should be concerned with.

Denise and Mary, a.k.a. Petunia Garner (a hilarious character that makes kids laugh while educating them), are devoted to giving children the information they need to grow into responsible adults.

As Denise said, "Let's teach children to be part of the solution and not part of the problem."

After hearing Denise and speaking with her at length, I came home inspired to be "greener."

While there is no way I can further shorten the length of my showers, I can be better about not forgetting my reusable grocery bags.

In just a few weeks, I have noticed that we have less trash and more recycling. I am also much more conscious of what we are throwing away.

My thanks to Denise and Mary for spreading the word about this important topic.

For more information on their organization, check the Web site at www.reapingnature.org.

Adlen Robinson is the author of "Home Matters:

The Guide to Organizing Your Life and Home."