

SUSTAINABLE MARBLEHEAD: Figuring out your energy profile

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Do you know what your carbon footprint is? Heck, do you even know what a carbon footprint is?

Well, a new citizens' group in town called Sustainable Marblehead is ready to clear things up for you.

The first thing you need to know about your carbon footprint is that you want to reduce it, that is, use as little energy as you comfortably can because carbon is one of the primary causes of climate change. Before you can do that, you need to estimate how much energy you use.

How much do you transport yourself and your children around? Are you unnecessarily adding to the waste stream or recycling and composting most of it? How much heat escapes your house in winter and how much electricity is required for your air conditioning in the summer? Are you mostly eating locally produced foods or consuming imported, heavily processed products?

You get the point. Now you need the facts.

If you go to the website, healthyhomehealthyplanet.org, you will find a section called "Calculate Carbon Footprint." There you will find four ways to evaluate how green you are: questionnaires from the EPA, Cool Climate Network, The Nature Conservancy, and another from the EPA for the student in your home. It's not that tough. Do it while you're paying your bills. How much did you pay for gas, electricity, and oil this month? What kind of light bulbs are you using? Do you do your laundry in hot or cold water? Are your appliances Energy Star models?

As you work your way down the list, new ideas may occur to you. Summer's here and you could get more exercise if you put some air in your bike's tires. You can tie a rope between two trees in your yard and save money by hanging your laundry out to dry. Maybe having worms eat your garbage appeals to you?

The quiz won't take more than 15 minutes and you get to compare yourself with the average American. Better than that, if you change just a few things in your life, you may significantly reduce your carbon footprint.

At the same time Sustainable Marblehead is conducting a carbon footprint analysis for the entire town, which will help identify opportunities for carbon reduction and energy savings as a community. For more information go to www.facebook.com/sustainablemarblehead/