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The problem with pro-planet purchasing



Becky Haltermon

Community Recorder guest columnist

I just bought a new pair of shoes. They're black-colored but I can assure you that these inky new shoes are very very green. They are made with organic cotton which was raised and made without toxic chemicals, hemp that requires no herbicides or pesticides, bamboo which is a plentiful and an easily renewable resource, recycled car tires, and, as icing on the environmental cake, they are shipped in a totally recycled cardboard box.

I have to say, I love these shoes.

As you may know, I'm an environmental avenger with a parallel passion for fashion and so, dear readers, you may imagine that I might be the happiest person on the planet. And I was, for a while. But after I ripped open the box, danced around my apartment in my shiny new footwear, and then heaved the beloved pair onto the pile of shoes in my closet, I had to ask myself a very serious question: Do I really need another pair of shoes?

The answer is, of course, no. No

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These shoes are environmentally sound, but was a new pair of shoes really necessary?

way. I have more shoes than anyone needs. And while it is great to support an environmentally awesome company when buying my frivolities, I sheepishly admit that if I really wanted to do something great for the planet, I'd quit buying junk I don't need.

I don't think I'm alone when I say I suffer from an absurd urge to acquire increasing amounts of unnecessary goods. In the Story of Stuff (www.storyofstuff.com), a short film about consumerism, Annie Leonard reveals that we average Joes in the U.S. now consume twice as much as did folks 50 years ago. Not only that, but we are tossing twice as

much in the trash than our forefathers did 30 years ago and, even more frighteningly, Annie intones that "for every one garbage can of waste we put out on the curb, 70 garbage cans of waste were made upstream to make the junk in that one garbage can you put out on the curb."

So even if my wondrous new shoes were made in a way that doesn't contribute as much junk to the waste stream, they are still another symptom of this messy crass consumerism that pervades our culture.

Sigh. I still love them.

So I suppose the moral of this story is that the next time I need to buy something, it is totally laudable to shop the green company that's going the extra mile. But even more important is to ask myself: Is this something I really need to buy?

Discuss consumerism, environmentalism, nonconformism, and shopaholism with me and find out more information about this and a host of other eco topics at <http://kyecogeek.blogspot.com/>.

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