



going green patrol

Support your kids' interest in saving the earth and save your family some money too. It all starts with fun, educational activities around the house.

Protecting the planet? Today's kids are all over it. You can help them make a difference that can be calculated in dollars and cents by channeling their enthusiasm into household roles. It's an effort that has worked for mom Michelle Andrade of Nashville, Tennessee, cofounder of **coolmomscare.org**, an online community for parents and kids who want to make a difference. "My utility bills are lower than they've ever been, just from easy moves like turning off the faucet when we're brushing our teeth," Andrade says. And, she adds, getting kids of all ages involved is easier than you might think. "If we give them the opportunity to see how little things can make a difference, then they in turn are going to take that initiative."

Ready to inspire your kids? Start with these earth- and pocketbook-friendly ideas:

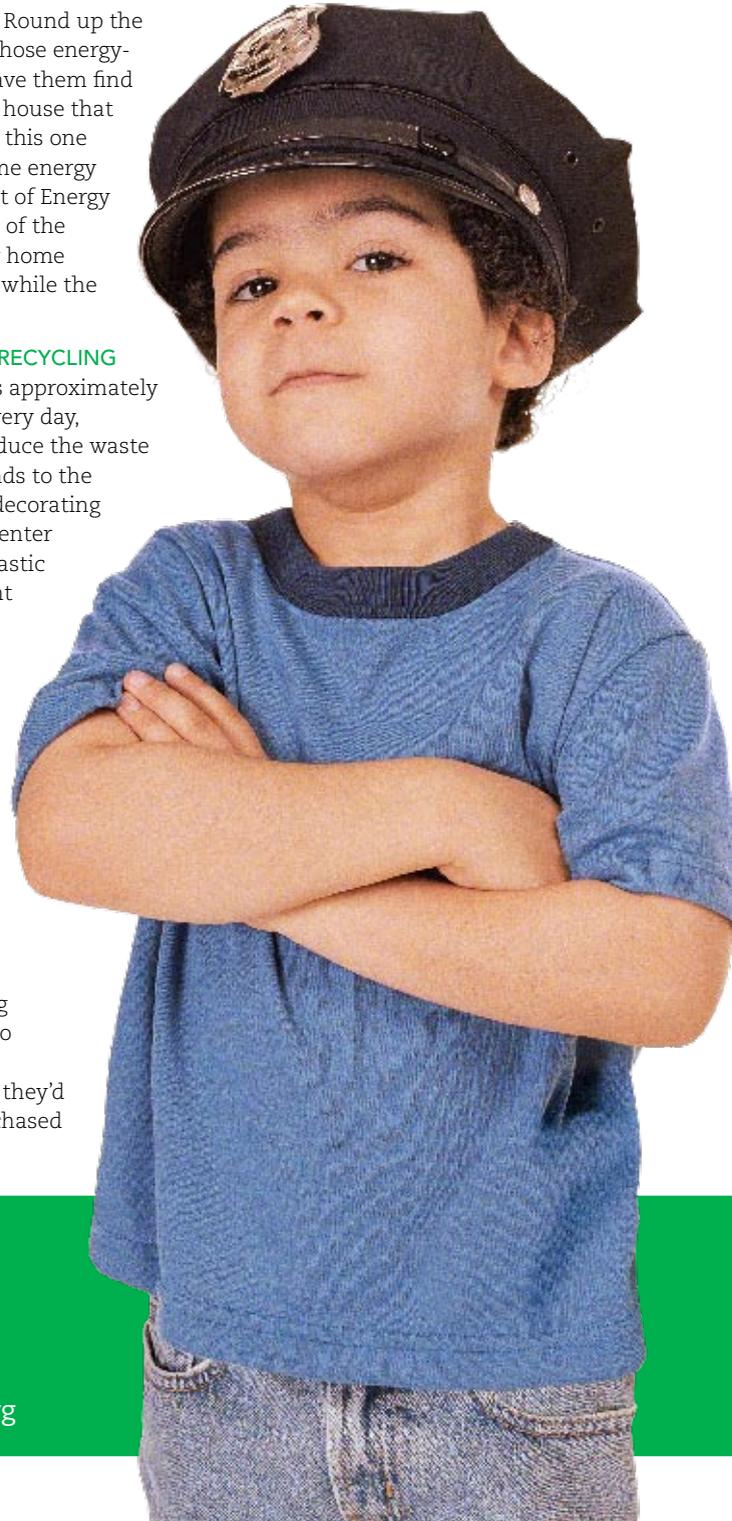
CALL THE WATER POLICE One of the biggest water-wasting perpetrators in the house is easy to apprehend: Challenge kids to shut off the tap while they brush their teeth. Doing so can save as much as 3,000 gallons of water per person per year, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). And it's the sort of thing kids of all ages get into. "The other day my husband was brushing his teeth and left the faucet running. My 2½-year-old daughter told him, 'Dad, we need to turn that off. That's wasteful!'" Andrade says.

THWART ENERGY THIEVES Even when they're not in use, household appliances and electronics that are plugged in

are busy sucking energy. Round up the kids to assist in slaying those energy-consuming creatures. Have them find all the electronics in the house that you could unplug. Doing this one thing can slash your home energy bills, the U.S. Department of Energy says, because 75 percent of the electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the units are turned off.

GATHER SUSPECTS FOR RECYCLING

Each American produces approximately 4.6 pounds of garbage every day, according to the EPA. Reduce the waste each family member sends to the landfill by creating and decorating a homemade recycling center using garbage cans or plastic bins. Then have kids hunt for "treasure" that you can recycle together: boxes, plastic bottles, scraps of paper—loot that's not being used that they can safely pick up. What about saving money? Brainstorm innovative ways to reuse items before they're tossed in the bin. Andrade and her daughter turn everything from yogurt containers to cereal boxes into crafts projects, saving on what they'd otherwise spend on purchased crafts and activities. •



more ways to go green

For more ideas on conservation projects that are perfect for kids, visit:

- epa.gov/kids
- energystar.gov
- greenhour.org
- kidsgardening.org