

You're Never Too Old To... Go Green

Ready to go green? With these simple moves, you can protect the environment for future generations without sacrificing comfort or convenience.

By Julie Collins

People of all ages—retirees in particular—are on a mission to go green. It's about making positive lifestyle changes with the goal of reducing your environmental footprint, improving your health, and saving money. And it's not as complicated as you might think.

Follow these surefire suggestions, and you'll be well on your way to living a more environmentally friendly lifestyle in no time.

Recycle

Tossing paper, aluminum, plastic, and glass items into a recycling bin rather than the garbage is one of the easiest moves you can make. And it's important, too, because we send all but a paltry 32.5 percent of our recyclable material to the landfill, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"We have always gotten our news primarily from newspapers, so we are throwing away a tremendous number of newspapers here weekly," says Albert Cook, 77, a resident of Brandon Woods at Alvamar* who, along with a couple of other residents, spearheaded a newspaper recycling program that has since expanded to include all types of paper.

Say Hello to CFLs

The next time a lightbulb burns out in your house, replace it with an energy-efficient compact fluorescent lightbulb (CFL), which uses approximately 75 percent less energy and

lasts up to 10 times longer than a standard incandescent bulb.

Unplug Those Appliances

Your alarm clock, microwave oven, and cell phone chargers all suck considerable amounts of energy when they're plugged in—even if you're not using them. Fortunately, combating these so-called "phantom loads" is simply a matter of unplugging electronics and small appliances, such as toasters and coffee pots, when they're not in use. Doing so can save you big-time on your energy bills, considering that the U.S. Department of Energy says 75 percent of the electricity used to power home electronics is used while they're turned off.

Use Green Cleaning Supplies

Cleaning supplies contain toxic chemicals that cause a variety of health problems—from eye irritation, rashes, coughing, and headaches to more serious ailments. Plus, those chemicals can cause considerable damage to the environment too. A safe alternative, "green" cleaning supplies are free of the most harmful chemicals, yet still provide the cleaning power you need. At Timber Ridge at Talus,* residents receive a six-month supply of the same Green Seal-certified cleaning supplies

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This is the third story in a series designed to inspire, enlighten, and entice you with ideas and actions to help keep you motivated in your life.

Get Your Copy of The Green Book Free

To receive a FREE copy of *The Green Book: The Everyday Guide to Saving the Planet One Simple Step at a Time* by Elizabeth Rogers and Thomas M. Kostigen (Three Rivers Press, 2007), fill out and mail the business reply card in this issue of *Transitions*.

Printed on 100 percent recycled paper, this New York Times best seller is packed with easy, practical ideas for adopting an eco-friendly lifestyle, from using a ceramic mug for your coffee to opting for an electronic tax refund. You'll also learn how your favorite celebrities, such as Martha Stewart and Robert Redford, are doing their part to save the environment.

WE RECYCLE

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“In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.”

—Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy

that are used by the housekeeping staff. “I think they’re every bit as efficient as the other ones,” says resident Donna Pratt, 78.

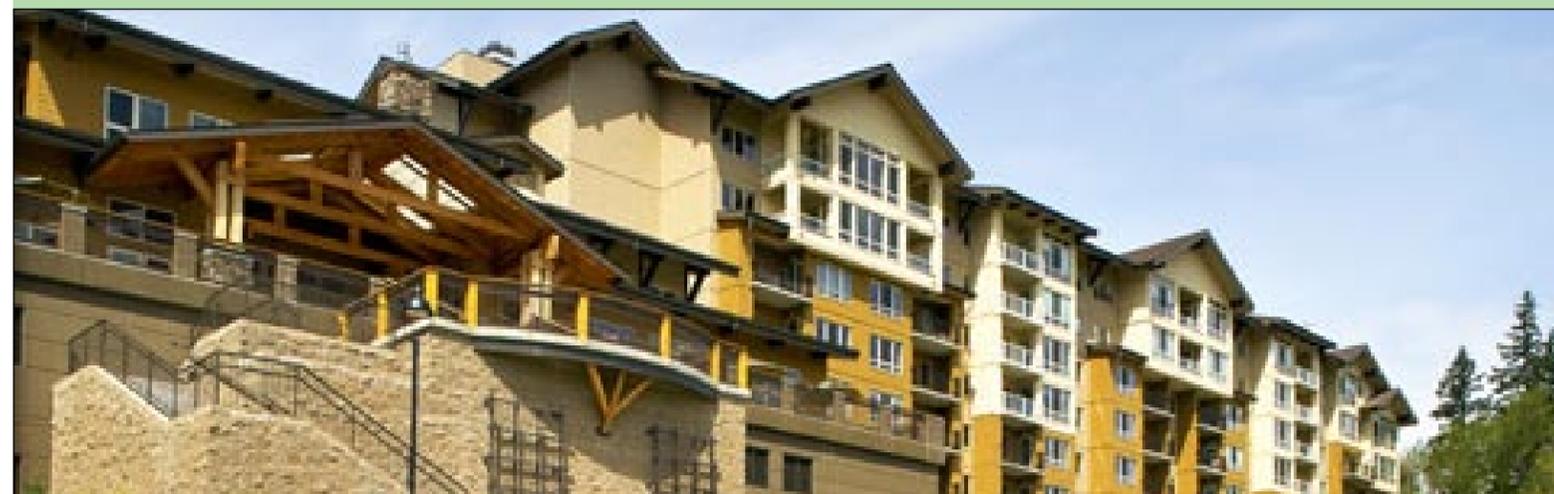
To ensure you are purchasing cleaning supplies that are truly green, look for as many of these terms as possible on product labels: biodegradable in three to five days; plant-based; hypoallergenic; contains no phosphates, chlorine, petroleum products, or ammonia; and formulated without dye or synthetic fragrance. Better yet, forgo purchased cleaning supplies altogether in favor of homemade ones—you can clean almost anything in your house with the right combinations of baking soda, vinegar, and warm water.

Downsize

By downsizing to a smaller residence, like those found in senior living communities, you can greatly reduce your environmental footprint. Heating, cooling, and maintaining your home requires less resources than if you live in a large house. You won’t need to purchase as many possessions to fill your home. And, perhaps best of all, you can greatly reduce your fuel consumption by living in a place where you can socialize, dine, exercise, and more without driving. ■

**Brandon Woods at Alvamar is a Life Care Services community located in Lawrence, Kansas. Timber Ridge at Talus is a Life Care Services community located in Issaquah, Washington.*

LEEDing the Way



To see how effective green building can be, look no further than Timber Ridge at Talus, a LEED™-certified Life Care Services (LCS) senior living community located in Issaquah, Washington.

The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System is a voluntary third-party certification program in which credits are earned for satisfying green building criteria related to sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality. Four certification levels—Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum—are awarded based on the total number of credits earned. Timber Ridge was recently awarded Silver certification and is the first continuing care retirement community to earn LEED certification of any level. Soon other LCS communities will follow suit.

“Life Care Services is concerned about the environment, is concerned about residents’ health and well-being, and that concern manifested itself in the decisions the company made about the design and construction of the building,” says Sue Nicol, project associate of O’Brien & Company in Seattle and one of the consultants who helped Timber Ridge obtain its LEED status.

In developing Timber Ridge, LCS and its partners started “thinking green” from the beginning. Work was done to reduce

site disturbance and protect natural areas around the community. Plus, more than 20 percent of the construction materials were manufactured and/or harvested locally. Landscaping consists of many native plants that do not require heavy watering or synthetic fertilizers.

Inside, each residence is equipped with an abundance of natural light, energy-saving lightbulbs, motion-sensor-activated lights, and ENERGY STAR appliances to reduce energy use. Water-saving devices—including water-efficient faucets, showerheads, and dual-flush toilets—are present throughout. And these features just scratch the surface of what the LEED-certified community offers.

Green building is about more than energy and water conservation. It’s also about the health and well-being of the people who live and work there. To that end, Timber Ridge used carpeting, paints, sealants, and solvents that have minimal volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which are chemical pollutants that off-gas into the air and can cause health problems. In addition, the installation of a carbon dioxide monitoring system helps keep residents healthy and safe.

Perhaps best of all for the residents of Timber Ridge, the buildings aren’t simply environmentally friendly, they’re also beautiful. And when it comes down to it, what more could you ask for?

Going Green Together

You can find more information about going green and locate networks of like-minded individuals on the Internet. Visit www.aarp.org, www.greenseniors.org, and www.greengranny.org.