

Sustainability Sunday Fact Sheet 5: It all starts at a source.

This week I attended the 2009 Sustainable Homes tour sponsored by the Heartland Renewable Energy Society and Stitt Energy Systems. There were seminars and lectures on commuting via bus and bike, booths by the leaders in Midwest renewable energy and finally a tour of 4 homes built in conjunction with people and contractors in the hopes of living as much as one can off the grid. Ironically these were not "green" advocates, nor were they even in some case liberal or anything else. They were just people, who were tired of being controlled with random taxes, and fees based on a system in which they had no say. On the tour there was a handicapped man with a disability dog named Alice, and though I learned an enormous amount from the tour on technologies I was unfamiliar with like soy based foam insulation, I learned more from the interactions between people on the tour. Out of most of the attendees the handicapped man had been on the tour before a few times [they do it every year nationwide in all major cities the first weekend in October] he was patient, helpful and kind. And as the majority of very touristy types crowded into the buildings and asked ridiculous questions he usually just kept back and respectfully took it all in. I found out later that he helps get people interested in sustainable building technology.

So coupled with a piece of writing I ran into the day before I decided to take this week to come back to the basics. Sustainability more than the physical actions, the movements, the banners, the [insert catchy green slogan here] is really just about choosing individually to respect where you're at and how you want to get wherever you're going. Though you can rage on about how we mistreat the environment, and yell and scream about veganism and animal cruelty chances are you're going to get just as far by shaking hands, smiling, and being a descent human being to those around you. I struggle with this quite a bit...I think most of us do, but if a man who has lost the use of his legs and overcome it to the point of still working in a field designed to help everyone around him, we sure as hell can too. So this week if you choose to, here are a few things you can do to live a little bit happier and thus more sustainably.

1. Say hello to someone you've never met
2. make a list of needs vs. wants see if the wants contribute to stress
3. take ten minutes out of each morning to sit quietly
4. have a meal with loved ones, and take your time
5. Try not carpooling somewhere, see if not driving relieves some stress
6. Make someone a gift simply because you can
7. take a walk in the woods, [not a city park]
8. make a list of 3 short term goals and pursue them
9. make 1 long term goal and pursue it
10. Be honest, and if you say you'll do something- follow through!

Thanks for coming out- Dane