

Remember the 4 R's: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Repair

May is National Bike Month - established 60 years ago in 1956. Whether you ride for work or play, your personal health, or the environment, this month is the perfect time to enjoy your bicycle.

May is also known as the time for Spring Cleaning?

Clutter - Remember as you downsize you should be cleaning out your closets and drawers. You know the guidelines: have you worn the clothing or shoes, or used the item in the past year? If not, then it will not be missed unless it is a tuxedo or special gown that you wear only once in a while. Once you have identified the items that you no longer wear or use you can donate them to the Salvation Army, Goodwill stores or local churches. You can also go online to Freecycle.com where you will find people who will be more than glad to take your useable clothing or household items. You may be amazed at how having less possessions actually gives us a better quality of life.

Cable TV. Save money by cutting back on pay TV services or canceling them altogether. I have a basic account with cable which gives me good reception of the educational and major TV networks plus access to the Community Billboard where I keep up with local politics and community events for only \$18 a month.

Take note of how many hours you have your TV playing. Select only the shows that you really enjoy and turn the others off. Currently there is a constant blaring of news related to the upcoming Presidential election, along with advertisements and other negativity, all of which can increase our stress levels and clutter our minds.

Books, Magazines, Audio CD's, DVD's and Newspapers. Our local libraries have an excellent selection of films and documentaries that can save you the expense of going to the movies. Many recently released movies are available at the local libraries and who does not love to watch the 'oldies but goodies' – ask your librarian how to reserve them.

I enjoy listening to audio books, while I do household chores or when I am driving. The library provides free access to just about any reading material that one can think of. I stopped buying magazines some years ago and now check out my favorite selections and yes, I even go to the library to read the local daily newspapers. If you still have magazines that come to your home you can donate them to a Dr.'s waiting room.

Technology. Consumers are gravitating to Netbooks, Kindle books, prepaid cell phones, etc. If you cannot afford a personal computer join the many people who go to the local libraries and use the very modern computers available at no cost to you.

Shopping. Browsing used to be an acceptable pastime. But many have realized that window-shopping encourages one to buy 'stuff' that is not needed. Shop only when necessary - make a list and stick to it, or skip the malls completely.

By now you may be thinking that I am very stingy ☺ but 'no' – the items that I have listed all help to lower consumerism, thus saving the environment while allowing me to save money, and contribute to my good health, spirituality and peace of mind.

It is easy to make these small changes in your home and lifestyle and it doesn't take long before it becomes part of one's routine. As we continue to make lifestyle changes we find that some bring surprising benefits.

Don't forget "Together we can make a difference". lesleyhaynes14@yahoo.com