

Living Green

Kate Farr's easy-to-implement eco tips and activities will help you get on board for Earth Day (April 22) and beyond



We've all been there. You reach the supermarket checkout, only to discover that you've left your reusable bag at home. Do you (a) resign yourself to paying the 50-cent fine and packing up the plastic, or (b) fork out for yet another reusable bag that will inevitably be forgotten next time (along with the others that you've panic-bought in this situation).

Before you reach for your wallet, take a moment to check just how much space you really need to pack those groceries.

Alongside son Jack, DB resident Gary Stokes recently launched the #trashthecheckout initiative, encouraging shoppers to send a clear message to our retailers by unwrapping and leaving unnecessary plastic packaging at the supermarket. The initiative forces

supermarket chains to confront the issue of unwanted packaging, and is a tangible way for kids to get involved in environmental direct action. And don't forget to sign Plastic Free HK's on-going petition to reduce plastic packaging in Hong Kong supermarkets (accessible via bit.ly/2la1Bpi).

Plastic Free Seas (PFS), meanwhile, requires little introduction. Founded by DB resident Tracey Read in 2012, this charity works tirelessly to change the way we all view and use plastics, delivering action campaigns, workshops, school talks and events throughout the year.

Reduce and reuse

Reducing the amount of waste we create starts in the home, and nowhere more so than in the toy box, so a toy swap is a good way to curb waste and expense. The concept is simple – each



The Crayon Society collection at DBIS

child picks out five items that they no longer play with and brings them along to swap. The toys are placed in the centre of the group and everyone takes it in turns to pick out a 'brand-new' item to take home. The result? Happy children, happy wallets and a far happier planet.

If your kids are growing like weeds, you'll be familiar with the mountain of barely-worn outfits, often in as-new condition. Aside from being a money pit, children's wardrobes also contribute to the increasing issue of textile waste in landfill; a pressing concern here in Hong Kong where space is at a premium.

Founded by a mum of two, local company Retykle is taking positive action on wardrobe waste, creating an online platform for parents to shop and sell their children's gently-used clothes. The result is a stylish boutique stocked with designer clothing at a fraction of the original price. Once your tykes have grown out of their togs, Retykle will collect, photograph and sell the items for you, closing the clothing loop in an eco-savvy way that's great for time-pushed parents.

Repurpose and recycle

It's surprisingly easy to repurpose everyday household items when you see things through the eyes of a child. Plastic bottles can be cut in half to create mini greenhouses; painted egg boxes become storage for small stationery items; and cardboard boxes plus imagination equal robots, houses and even space rockets.

One DB mum who is repurposing for a purpose is Crystal Lee Passarello, whose Crayon Society initiative gives new life to items that



A beach clean-up organised by PFS and DB Green

would otherwise end up in landfill. The group collects, sorts and melts down broken crayons, remoulding them into fun shapes that are then sold in aid of Hong Kong children's charities. Young volunteers can get involved in this fun and worthwhile rainy-day activity.

If you have already pruned your waste back to the bare minimum, it's time to cast a creative eye over that bulging bin. Consider sorting your trash by type in individual bins, bags or storage boxes that kids can be encouraged to manage. All of DB's villages have designated recycling facilities, and sorting the household waste into the correct bins is a weekly chore that can be made fun with the addition of a pocket-money incentive.

It's important to note, however, that some things need a little more effort to recycle. Unwanted electrical items, such as old computers, batteries and defunct appliances can be disposed of via the government's E-Waste programme, which runs a regular scheduled collection and disposal service.

Restore

A startling fact: Every piece of plastic ever made is still in existence, the result of which is brought into sharp focus when visiting DB's beaches, so often blanketed in waste left behind by visitors or washed in from the sea. This final piece of the eco-puzzle gives kids the opportunity to get hands-on resolving the crisis on our own doorstep.

Alongside PFS, local non-profit DB Green organises regular beach clean-ups that are suitable for the whole family. (You can join them on April 23 at Nim Shue Wan from 9am to 11am.) Bring your own reusable water bottle and you'll be supplied with reusable cotton gloves and rubbish sacks. The difference is immediate and profound, and underscores the importance of environmental awareness to kids that participate.

So, with a little awareness and creativity, the future is looking increasingly green for the next generation of DB families. **B**

FIND IT

- DB Green, www.dbgreen.org
- E-Waste programme, www.wastereduction.gov.hk
- Plastic Free HK, www.change.org/o/plastic-free_hk
- Plastic Free Seas, www.plasticfreeseas.org
- Retykle, www.retykle.com
- The Crayon Society Facebook page
- Trashthecheckout Facebook Page

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