

Earlier in the week I was at our local health food store waiting for my turn at the check-out counter when I noticed the lady in front of me had bought her own re-usable carry bags which suddenly made a lot more sense to me than choosing “paper or plastic”. When we witness examples of people choosing to live in a more sustainable and eco-friendly way, it causes us to stop and reflect on our own living and buying practices.

The Global Green USA program that invites celebrities to arrive at the Academy Awards in energy efficient transportation started in 2002 with just four participants. This year Jennifer Aniston and supporting-actress nominee Frances McDormand were among the 25 VIPs to participate in the fourth annual “Red Carpet, Green Cars” event sponsored by the environmental organization Global Green USA and Toyota Motor Corp. Participants in the program arrived in either Toyota or Lexus hybrids.

Considering that close to 40 million people watch the Academy Awards it creates a great opportunity for a lesson in green living and shows that you can be environmentally minded with style.

The same applies to planning a “green meeting”. In the process you are not giving up anything and can be saving a lot in terms of cost and waste in the process.

A green meeting or event incorporates environmental considerations to minimize any negative impact on the environment. There are also economic benefits to using recycled materials, reusing items and reducing the amount of materials used. Plan an environmentally responsible event and promote your event’s environmental features keeping the following ideas in mind:

- **Prevent and Reduce Waste**
 - Use double-sided printing for promotional materials and handouts.
 - Avoid mass distribution of handouts and allow attendees to order copies.
 - Provide reusable name badges.

- **Recycle and Manage Waste**
 - Collect paper and recyclable beverage containers in meeting areas.
 - Collect cardboard and paper in exhibit areas.
 - Collect cardboard, beverage containers, aluminum cans, and plastics in food vending areas.
 - If re-usable containers are not used, encourage use of recyclable beverage containers.

- **Conserve Energy and Reduce Traffic**

- Look for naturally lighted meeting and exhibit spaces.
- Publicize mass transportation options.
- Provide shuttle service from mass transit stops or hotels to the event site.

- **Food Service and Accommodations**
 - Plan food service needs carefully to avoid unnecessary waste.
 - Consider use of durable food service items.
 - Donate excess food to charitable organizations.
 - Work with hotel on non-replacement of linens, soaps, etc.

- **Buy Environmentally Aware Products**
 - Use recycled paper and vegetable- and soy-based inks for promotional materials and handouts.
 - Consider selling or providing refillable containers for beverages.
 - Provide reusable containers for handouts or samples (pocket or file folders, cloth bags).
 - Where reusable items are not feasible, select products that are made from recovered materials and that also can be recycled.

- **Educate Participants and Exhibitors**
 - Request the use of recycled and recyclable handouts or giveaways.
 - Request that unused items be collected for use at another event.
 - Encourage participants to recycle materials at the event.
 - Reward participation by communicating environmental savings achieved.

For more information and support in planning your “green meetings”, go to: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - Green Conference Initiative
<http://www.epa.gov/oppt/greenmeetings/>

The Green Meetings / Conference Initiative was developed and is supported by the EPA’s Pollution Prevention Division to provide conference planners and suppliers of conference services, easy access to environmentally friendly goals of conference planning. The Initiative provides green options and opportunities for conference planning.

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