

The Earth Steward

My first thoughts when we speak of "Going Green" are windmills cropping up as far as the eye can see across the vast plains of the Texas Panhandle. Our area has taken on the challenges of harnessing wind power in an effort to conserve our nation's natural resources and tap into the free wind power that God has graciously given to us for free. The thoughts of utilizing these new technologies to conserve natural resources isn't new to my family or to me. We were seriously involved several years ago when my dad headed the team of Pampa High School students that took a solar car to the Winston Cup Challenge at Texas Motor Speedway. In that specific competition, many teams from around the world, designed, built, and raced vehicles that were powered only by solar energy. My dad's team celebrated a victory by placing second in that competition. The topic of conversation at our house for an entire year was centered around nothing but the solar car information learned and how successful the kids were rushing around town gathering materials to construct the car in a garage near our farm. This particular car was powered by agricultural grade solar panels, which surprised all judges and other competitors. Those had never been used in this application but as our Pampa students said, "You use what is available to you in your area." We witnessed countless hours of research and development and still have the solar car stored at our farm. It became a reality that someday we may be driving around a vehicle that is powered by the sun. You can just imagine how exciting that could be to have the only solar car in the area in our possession. I wasn't old enough to drive it but the excitement of thinking I was a first-hand witness to the first solar car racing team was overwhelming. Winning that title was quite an honor to see and I felt that I was a little part of the success. What would life be like if we all had an electric or solar powered car to drive around town? Changing the way America drives was one way for me to begin the process of learning to conserve the oil and gas resources that are quickly becoming scarce in our nation. New smart cars are being introduced annually to consumers so the thoughts of

being a good steward of the earth and utilizing any alternatively powered transportation was quickly becoming a reality in my lifetime. I was a witness to the history of solar power. That was powerful.

Another resource conscious effort that I've always been accustomed to was the fact that my father also served as our district's Energy Manager. No Christmas, Spring Break, Easter, or summer vacation could be enjoyed until each classroom in our community had been checked for energy waste. We visited every classroom to lower or raise thermostats, check for water leaks, unplug all power strips, and shut down each campus completely for the times that it would not be occupied. Guess who had to also ensure that it was all plugged back in, running, or back to a comfortable temperature? I was an excited player in the game of rushing throughout each room of our nine campuses to prepare buildings for our communities' students and teachers. It was quite an honor to be able to say that I had unlocked every door of every room in every school for the sake of conservation. I also wanted each teacher to know that we had done a good job getting his or her room back to a comfortable climate when school started. These efforts have made me more aware of "going green" and being more aware of conservation as I have been raised in a conservation minded family. I was doing my part by taking responsibility to be a good steward of our natural resources.

In my years at the junior high, in the honors courses I took, I was required to initiate a community service project. For that assignment I chose to do a recycling project. We placed a box at several places in the community and collected used bears and bibles. I attached a bible to every bear and then presented these offerings to the firemen in our community to give out to the children when they were faced with a serious situation. I felt a sense of accomplishment, not only by recycling used toys and bibles, but by perhaps offering a bit of hope to the children facing a difficult day. By receiving a bear and bible perhaps some comfort was experienced. This wasn't a grand leap into the problem of conserving our renewable resources but it may have saved a little space in our community landfill.

Now that I am older and beginning to think of my own career I am more conscious of the career that my brother has selected. He is a high voltage lineman for Xcel Energy. When storm season begins and he is called out to work at 4:00 a.m. I am continually worried about his safety as they work with the dangerous electrical equipment in even more dangerous environments. There has to be a better way for these men to keep the electricity flowing to customers around the Panhandle. Safety is my main concern because it's my brother. Isn't it time for more research to be done into the delivery of the much needed electricity to people without it? I have no knowledge of electrical information, but I have encouraged several people to go into the area of wind energy education. The wind power of Texas at times is producing as much as 25% of the electricity on our state's power grid. This is a staggering new way to power our state. Many classmates have become aware of the wind energy programs because as you drive through our area the turbines are steadily spinning, reminding us of the ability of our generation to change the way America uses it's natural resources. I am encouraging classmates I know to go into this growing field because by the end of 2012 there were 45,100 wind turbines across America and that number climbs daily. We are witnesses to the many newly constructed wind turbines in the Texas Panhandle daily.

I have participated in many activities dealing with the area of conservation through my lifetime. I hope to always be able to continue to be an advocate in the areas of "Going Green". I appreciate the great environment I was born in and I wish to encourage everyone to be good steward of the resources we have and always strive to continue to invent new ways of making our world better for the next generation.