

October 2009

## A Halloween of Green is Keen

Once upon a long time ago when I was a kid, my siblings and I used to scrounge around the house for Halloween costumes. One year my mom wrapped up my head with gauze, put my arm in a sling and I went as a minute-man. Another year I had my sister's outgrown multi-colored long dress, covered my head in a bandana, borrowed some bracelets and went as a gypsy. Just a couple years ago, I donned my scuba diving wetsuit, mask, snorkel, and flippers, slicked back my wet hair with gel, and went as a snorkeler. I didn't go anywhere...just stayed home to enjoy the Trick-or-Treaters.

You probably have similar memories. *Back in the olden times* there didn't seem to be ready-made costumes glistening on the racks of stores – you just made your own. And it was fun, imaginative, silly, awesome, and green before green came into its own.

### Encourage Creativity and Pride with Homemade Costumes!

Halloween provides a perfect opportunity to go green even if you don't dress up as the Hulk or Wicked Witch of the West. If you have kids, you might see (or have seen) their eyes twinkling at the glistening store shelves that beckon them to costumes. Resist, I say! Resist! And guide them to create their own from found objects and supplies. Not only will it save your pocketbook, but will help save the environment too. And their eyes will sparkle with pride that they used their imaginations, even if with your help, to create one-of-a-kind costumes themselves.

### Greening Your Choices

Most store bought products, whether Halloween costumes or just general...well...stuff, requires fuel to produce, package, transport, and dispose of at the end of its life. And the fuel that is used contributes to air pollution and global climate change, which is affecting our health and that of the planet.

- About every 30+ miles driven puts about one pound of pollution into the air.
- Every gallon of gasoline a vehicle burns puts about 25 pounds of carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas causing climate change, into the air.

Speaking of fuel and air pollution, you can also help your little green goblins be really green by Trick-or-Treating with them on foot rather than by driving up and down the hallowed streets. And forget that idling! Idling gets zero miles per gallon and continues to spew pollutants into the little fairies' and superhero's lungs, which are more vulnerable than already-grown adult lungs.

In addition to air quality and climate change benefits, home-made costumes also are enmeshed in the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle mantra, which hosts widespread environmental benefits including conserving natural resources, energy, water, and air. Home-made costumes reduce the need for virgin resources new products require; reduces the amount of waste associated with making and purchasing new products; reuse the number of already existing items, and recycle old items into a new, original product -- that incredible Halloween costume!

Green is coloring the spirits of all of us these days. Maybe I'll see more home-made costumes come to my door this year as people realize that going green saves money, too. But first I have to do some scrounging around and come up with a keen costume for myself...because it's fun, imaginative, silly, awesome, and green!

Submitted by Karen Wilhelmsen, PDEQ