Make Ripples

Sustainability Tips from Ripples Blog

by Amanda Bancroft

I had no idea how to connect composting toilets, volunteer recruitment, chocolate chip cookies, web design, flying squirrels and China...but there had to be a way. It was August 2011 and my two years of service in AmeriCorps*VISTA had just ended. During service, my husband Ryan and I met people from around the country and the world, became aware of issues facing our planet, and compiled resources on various topics, from building a website to building a compost toilet.

If you were thinking we were going to sit a volunteer on a compost toilet while holding a laptop made in China and put a flying squirrel eating a cookie on their head, good guess! But no. What we ended up doing was creating a blog. A blog that could help us keep in touch with our network of inspiring changemakers, and improve the efficiency of non-profit organizations. A blog that could share resources on living sustainably and tell our story of embarking on a journey to live off-grid in an earthbag home. A blog called Ripples.

Why *Ripples?* Because small droplets make big waves. We are insignificant in the grand scheme of life. Yet everyone is able to make ripples of positive change in the world. The smallest action can have a phenomenal impact.

Ripples blog is now off the grid, powered by 100% solar energy. We also have two Wiki spaces for sharing information, one for sustainable living and one to benefit non-profit organizations. These are ever-expanding "works in progress," and everyone is welcome to share their own resources and expertise. It's like a potluck online!

We also wanted a way to raise money for various organizations and green projects, to convert the blog to solar, and to provide free community workshops next year on earthbag building. Gradually, Ripples became not just a blog but a lifestyle: how can we make *every* aspect of our life create something wonderful in the world?

Thus began two home businesses: I sell organic & fair trade cookies, and Ryan provides technology consultation to non-profits. With cookies & computers, we can help flying squirrels through Ripples' conservation work, and plan our earthbag homestead to ensure native species have protected habitat on the land we hope to purchase.

I'm really grateful for the opportunity to share tips on sustainable living in this column, including our story of living without a car, attracting wildlife, and more. You can think of me as your guinea pig – testing things out so you can decide if it's right for you or not.

As it turned out, we managed to connect every one of those topics together, except China. There are people in 90 countries reading Ripples, but no one is from China...yet.

Ripples is a blog connecting people to resources on sustainable living while chronicling our off-grid journey and supporting the work of non-profit organizations. Read more on this topic and others at www.RipplesBlog.org