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## The Williams Family Takes The Green Living Challenge

by Kristy Brannen



Participating in the Green Living Challenge was the perfect way for the Williams family to get back on track with doing their share to protect the environment. Lorrie Williams, president of Fluff Your Stuff Interior ReDesign, Inc., explained that becoming a greener family was definitely something she and her husband, Andy, a corporate communications manager at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, wanted to do with their children Zac, 15, Jake, nine, and Seth, seven, but it just never seemed to make it to the top of their to-do list.

"We've been wanting to do better with 'going green' around the house,"

## 21 Day Green Challenge

If you are serious about changing your lifestyle to help save the environment, let us know why we should choose you. The challenge is open to families in the greater Omaha area. In each monthly issue of Omaha Family, we will select a new family. If yours is chosen, a member of the Green Omaha Coalition will provide an initial evaluation and give you lots of help and suggestions. Then, in 21 days we'll check on your progress and tell your story in the next issue of Omaha Family. Each featured family will receive a gift basket full of "green" items to help you continue your work living green in Omaha! Go ahead- Go Green!

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Williams said. "We knew that there were lots of simple things we needed to implement and this was a great opportunity to put them into practice and to get input about new green practices."

Williams said she was dreading the meeting with her husband, Dan, and Lawse. "I was afraid we would have the biggest carbon footprint we had ever seen and that he would report us to the EPA," she said. But her worries turned out to be unfounded. In fact, Williams was pleased to learn that her family's carbon footprint came in under the national average for a family of five.

#### Baby steps

Prior to participating in the Green Living Challenge, the Williams family didn't have a lot of green practices in place. According to Williams, the family used to recycle, but those efforts stopped a while ago when their recycle bin was lost in a storm. "Needless to say, we have a long way to go," she said.

During her meeting with Lawse, Williams identified six goals for the three-week challenge. The goals focused on getting the Williams family on the track to creating a greener home and life.

Goal One: Sign up for RecycleBank through Elkhorn Sanitation Total cost: none

Williams explained that through this program the family actually will benefit without having to pay any additional cost. RecycleBank is a program offered by various sanitation service companies, like Elkhorn Sanitation Services, that rewards participants for recycling.

Upon enrolling in the program, participants receive a special container that is scanned and weighed every time recycling is picked up. Participants then accumulate points for every pound of recycling. At any point, they can log onto their account at RecycleBank.com and redeem their points for rewards at a variety of merchants.

Goal Two: Install a minimum of 12 compact fluorescent light bulbs Total cost: Approximately \$5 per bulb\*

Williams has no doubt that this initial investment will pay off in the long run. In fact, CFLs can save as much as \$35 in energy costs compared to an incandescent bulb used over the same period of time. Although the kids still need to be reminded, Williams said the family also is working on turning off lights that aren't in use. \*When purchased in multi-packs, CFLs average \$2 a piece.

Goal Three: Weather-strip the front door, patio door, and the back door Total cost: To be determined

The Williams family is still working on this particular goal. She explained that now that the holidays are over, she and her husband plan to tackle this goal very soon.

Goal Four: Install can light inserts Total cost: To be determined

The idea behind installing can light inserts is to add insulation, which will make heating and cooling the house more efficient. These inserts basically fit into existing can lights and help prevent airflow. At this point, the Williams family is still researching their options and hopes to accomplish this goal in the coming weeks.

Goal Five: Install low-flow showerhead in kid's bathroom Total cost:

Name:  
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Briefly, why you want to take the

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Installing a low-flow showerhead will help the Williams family conserve water and reduce their water bill. According to Williams, the kid's bathroom was chosen because her children tend to take very long showers. At this point, she hasn't heard any complaints and is considering installing one in the other shower.

Goal Six: Use cold water for a majority of laundry Total cost: None

This change seemed like a no-brainer to Williams. There is no investment cost and washing clothes in cold water has a tendency to make them last longer.

Saving some money, and the planet Participating in this challenge will do much more than save the Williams family some money. I think it has increased our awareness of all the different ways we can help take care of the environment, Williams said.

Initially, Williams was concerned about the amount of money that would have to be spent to make her family's home greener. After participating in this challenge, she now knows that going green doesn't necessarily mean having to spend a lot of green. "I was concerned about the cost of implementing environmentally-friendly products, but have been pleasantly surprised to find that many of the changes are either free or very reasonable," she said.

What's next?

Williams doesn't plan to call it good once these six goals have been met. Her next step is to seek out more Earth-friendly products. "We want to make a conscious choice to use green products when they are available," she said.

She also plans to incorporate what she has learned into her business, Fluff Your Stuff Interior ReDesign, Inc. "We are making an intentional effort at Fluff to educate ourselves on what is available for our clients to make their homes more environmentally sound," she said. Recently, one of her partners attended a green conference in order to help the company become more knowledgeable on green products and options.

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