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## Green and Greener: Eco-balancing Your Life

By Dave Rochlin and Katy Foreman

**Dave:** I was making the holiday party rounds right after our last column ran, and quite a few people commented on my self described "lazy environmentalist" tag. Apparently, it really resonated. Several friends said "hey...that's me too!" Most of us WANT to do the right thing, but why does it have to be so hard to do?

**Katy:** Assuming it's hard is the first problem. There are about a thousand easy tips that you can try, and see if they work for you.

**Dave:** Such as?

**Katy:** How about using a power strip to fully turn off your TV and game systems, or turning off the heater and opening your windows when it's 73 in January!

**Dave:** Okay, I'll concede that point, but have you ever tried to use the County Connection bus to Bart? Also, a lot of us have to schlep kids around. And I am sure you noticed that I stopped biking to work along the Lafayette trail about the time the thermometer started hitting 40. Sometimes you just need to drive. Where do you draw the line?

**Katy:** We all draw the line differently. And that's fine - the key is to just keep trying new things and finding ways to conserve that work for you. For example, when I finally got into a groove of bringing my canvas bags and reusing my produce bags at the grocery store, I found I preferred it. They are more comfortable to carry, and the people at Whole Foods are always thanking me for doing it. I like it MORE than using new bags each time. But it took trying it a few times for that to happen.

**Dave:** Yeah...I get the guilt of watching everyone else in Trader Joe's load up their canvas. I do have to say, at TJ's (at least in Lafayette) they pack those paper bags tight. Sometimes I think they just want to make you squirm for using paper in the first place.

I am not against trying new things, and constant improvement is a good thing. But even you haven't gotten your emissions down to zero.

**Katy:** No one is going to get to zero anytime soon. I try to avoid that all-or-nothing thinking; it sabotages me every time (and is why most diets fail, right?). So my approach is to keep trying to reduce in all the ways I can, see what sticks, and use carbon offsets for the rest.

Offsetting lets you support greenhouse gas reducing projects around the world while retaining some flexibility in your own life. They're crucial to fighting global warming in the short-term, while efficiencies and renewable energy are still in development.

**Dave:** It's a good solution for airline travel in particular. You and I both fly fairly often, and places like Hawaii seems to be "Lamorinda West" during spring break. All that flying is pretty tough on the planet, but I don't see Toyota making any hybrid airplanes.

**Katy:** I'm pretty sure you don't see Toyota making airplanes at all.

**Dave:** So we need to find another way to make up for all that carbon that jet engines release on our behalf. Offsetting has been practiced at a national level for a while in Europe and other places where they have set voluntary emissions targets. The way it works is that by supporting things like forests or energy efficiency projects elsewhere, you make up for what you 'have to' emit at home. But I am sure many people reading this would ask "why should I as an individual do it?"

**Katy:** Well...I hate it when people spill their drinks on BART or leave their dog's waste on the trail. The degradation of common spaces and resources affect all of us, and we all need to do our part to care for and preserve them. Climate change is this same concept on a much larger scale. We all have to take responsibility for our impact on it.

**Dave:** My pet peeve is people who leave dirty towels lying on the floor in the locker room at the gym .....I guess the earth is the biggest locker room of them all.

**Katy:** I wouldn't call it a locker room yet, but we're headed for a hot and stinky future if we don't take action.

**Dave:** Well I hope it's not too late! Anyway...I love the idea that when I fly, drive, or even just watch a movie, I can still make that activity 'carbon neutral'. And yes, I know that I need to reduce first.

**Katy:** You're learning. For our readers, if you want to see what sort of offsets are out there, our website ([www.ClimatePath.org](http://www.ClimatePath.org)) has a variety of projects listed. You can also calculate your footprint from flying, driving, and your home, and learn more about conservation and offsetting for yourself.

Katy Foreman is a committed environmentalist who lives in Lafayette, and Dave Rochlin is a lazy environmentalist who lives in Moraga. Together they operate ClimatePath, a website helping individuals and businesses reduce their carbon footprints by offsetting and conserving in the ways that are right for them. ClimatePath is on the web at [www.climatepath.org](http://www.climatepath.org)

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