

A Zero-Waste Kitchen—it's a Process

By Sophie Braccini



Nanette Hefferman in her kitchen with a few of the bulk food containers she takes to the store. She is holding a jar of homemade yogurt sweetened with local honey and fresh berries from her garden. Photo provided

Of the 3R's of sustainable life—Reduce, Reuse, Recycle—Nanette Hefferman's favorite is the first one: the new challenge the mother of three little children set for herself is to have a zero-waste kitchen. Recycling is not enough for the woman who is skeptical about the reality of the process and does not believe it solves any problems. But as she discovered, it takes ingenuity and time to live trash-free in a world that, in the name of convenience, packages everything extensively.

"The first reason for this decision is that, according to the EPA, packaging is the largest category of waste, making up 30% of municipal waste," says Hefferman, "that's a huge opportunity." Packaging also encourages the sale of non-durable goods, plastics and junk. She believes that the best solution to our growing trash pile is not to waste in the first place, "Recycling has a down side; it justifies the waste," she says.

Hefferman thought that the kitchen, the number one place for

creating trash in the home, should be the first place for starting living waste-free. With her vegetable garden and her chickens, a nice percentage of the food she puts on the table comes totally free of any kind of packaging. But she still has to shop for many things. Hefferman started looking at where she was doing her shopping with a different perspective. "When you want to eliminate packaging you have to stay away from processed food," she says, "you have to shop the perimeter aisles, it eliminates a lot of problems."

But to fully solve the waste=0 equation, Hefferman had to go beyond the 'bring your own bag' slogan to the 'bring your own container' scheme. "Many stores now sell washable, reusable produce bags that can easily be used instead of the plastic ones," says Hefferman, "and for the rest, I shop bulk and bring my own jars." When Hefferman goes shopping to one of her favorite Lafayette grocery stores, she gets her containers weighed. Whole Foods says it encourages cus-

tomers to bring their own containers, "Just bring your jars to the customer service station, we'll weigh it and put a little sticker on it, and the cashier will deduct it when you check out," said a Whole Foods employee.

Maintaining her kitchen demands advanced organizational skills, but Hefferman calculates that it is worth the effort, even from a budgetary perspective. "Buying bulk and preparing things yourself can save up to 80 percent of the price of food," she says. "Beans are a great example—dry beans cost a fraction of those in cans. I also make our yogurt, which costs just a few cents." Other items, such as flour, are not much less expensive bought in bulk. She estimates that in the summer, her grocery bill is cut in half, because the family grows a lot of its own produce, and the overall amount of their recycling has also gone down by 50 percent. "For me buying bulk is a way of life," says Hefferman, "my kids eat better and their food never comes out of plastic containers or bags."

Former Governor of Michigan Delivers Economic Lesson

By Cathy Tyson



Jennifer Granholm and Dan Mulhern seated. Photo Cathy Tyson

"The story of Michigan is a cautionary tale for the country," said former Governor of Michigan Jennifer Granholm, who along with husband Dan Mulhern entertained a full house of eager attendees at a book tour event for the Commonwealth Club at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center.

Granholm served two terms as the Governor of Michigan, starting in 2002, winning re-election in 2006 during an unprecedented crises in manufacturing. Chatting with dotting husband, and co-author, Dan Mulhern, the evening got off to a comical start with moderator Lisa Vorderbruggen introducing everyone and asking about the proper way to address Mulhern; "first husband?" she asked. "First and last husband," said Mulhern, to chuckles from the audience. In his role as the spouse of the Governor he was "First Gentleman of Michigan."

The very down to earth, plain spoken pair who met in law school

have an easy chemistry, and laid out a few of the many economic challenges of running the state over eight tumultuous years. All the details are spelled out in their new book, *A Governor's Story: The Fight for Jobs and America's Economic Future*.

Granholm described the book as a, "Story for the country – about the role of government and what we can do as a nation...How do you deal with life when fundamental assumptions have changed." In her opinion, low skilled manufacturing jobs are not coming back, especially in a global economy.

She illustrated this with a story of the Electrolux Corporation – formerly headquartered in Greenville, Michigan. With a town population 8,400 – 2,700 of those souls worked at the Electrolux refrigerator factory, the epitome of the company town. Understanding the financial pressure the firm was under, and knowing that if the business left it would be devastating to the community,

Granholm offered extremely generous tax breaks and incentives from the state and local municipality. But in the end, the millions of dollars in concessions were not able to compete with the \$1.57 per hour they were slated to pay new workers in Juarez, Mexico.

Granholm outlined her attempt to improve Michigan's economy with twentieth century solutions, for what turned out to be twenty-first century problems. Despite aggressively cutting taxes, the state is 48th out of 50th in per capita government spending, and a personal income flat tax rate of 4.35% – one might assume that small government and lower taxes would spur growth. Unfortunately Michigan still has one of the highest rates of unemployment in the nation.

Granholm called for strategic interventions that allowed the state to diversify, which has slowly nudged the unemployment rate that spiked at 14% at the end of 2009 to 10.6% as of October 2011, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The pair advises investing in people, creating an incredibly educated workforce - something that they're working on right now. Mulhern is a Distinguished Practitioner of Business and Law at UC Berkeley. Granholm will be taking a sabbatical from her current teaching position at the Goldman School of Public Policy at Berkeley to host a television show devoted to covering the upcoming presidential election on new cable network, Current TV, starting in January. Not bad for a woman who grew up on the peninsula and at one time, many years ago was "Miss San Carlos."

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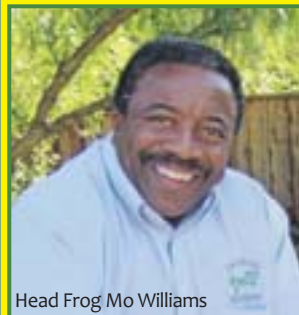
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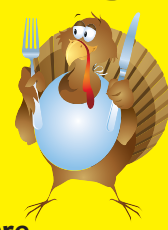


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