

How to help the world while helping yourself

By Sally Mathieson

We see them everyday-boycotting the Exxon station, protesting apartheid in South Africa, circulating petitions to protect the spotted owl and save old growth forest. We hurry on by on our way to class, the library or the EMU, and feel a pang of guilt. Is there something more we could be doing?

Helping has different levels. Chaining yourself to a federal building is one way to make your voice heard. Unfortunately, few students have the time or the inclination for this kind of protest. Donating \$100 to Greenpeace would be great, if only that emergency loan didn't have to be paid off. And if it wasn't for that 10-page paper due Monday, we would have gone to the Nevada testing site in a flash.

The life of a typical college student does not mesh well with radical protesting. "I'd love to help more but it seems like I

always have homework or a class to go to!" says UO sophomore Kristina Johnson. However, there are other, less extreme, ways of fighting for a cause or working for a solution to the problems of planet Earth.

Are you aware of violations being committed by a large corporation, such as the Exxon oil spill in Alaska? Show your disapproval by boycotting products associated with the company. It may cause some inconvenience, but buying gas at the station down the street or switching from Coors to Rainier is not going to radically alter your lifestyle. Yet the message comes across to the offenders.

Would you like to be more involved? Let the companies know directly by writing them a letter expressing your outrage. Write to people involved in making public policy, such as city officials or senators. (OSPIRG has a

form letter for writing to these people that helps you state your message clearly.) Letters to the editor of the local paper help to alert the public.

If you do have some extra cash, instead of buying that new C.D. or pair of shorts, donate it to a cause you believe in. Many organizations provide an expenditure summary detailing how donations are spent. If a group is having a bake sale, try buying your daily muffin there. The money will go to a worthy cause, and you will feel good knowing your eating helped in a round-about way. Alerting your parents and relatives to problems can result in them donating some money.

Recycling takes an effort but the results, a clean, beautiful environment and some extra cash in your pocket, are worth it.

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