

# The Lakewood Observer

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## New Year's Resolutions by Heather Ramsey

by Heather Ramsey

Though you may think it is a little late to make New Year's Resolutions, it is always a good time to commit to making a positive change. So, if you've got some room on your resolution list, or haven't made any at all, consider one (or more) of these easy, and often money-saving, green options (in no particular order):

**1. Start using a reusable bag for all of your shopping, rather than paper or plastic disposable bags.** Or, if you've already bought a bag, but keep forgetting it, as I often do, commit to keeping it where you'll actually use it. Many reusable bags fit easily in a purse, and some even have clips so that they'll attach to your key ring.

Why? We use hundreds of billions of plastic bags each year, each of which requires petroleum to produce and many of which end up either in landfills or as litter. Hundreds of thousands of animals are killed each year from eating plastic bags that appear to be food.

How? Check out the wide selection available at reusablebags.com or stop by Green Smart Gifts. Many stores also sell their own versions near the checkout.

**2. Use a water filter and a refillable bottle rather than buying bottled water; use a reusable mug or thermos for coffee rather than styrofoam cups.**

Why? It takes some oil and more water than the bottle will contain to produce a plastic bottle, and more than 3/4 of them end up in landfills. And, though you may think the water you buy is better, the standards are less strict than for tap water, and it costs a whole heck of a lot more. Meanwhile, Americans consume hundreds of millions of cups of coffee each day, much of it in single-use containers, sending millions of cups to landfills where, if they're made of styrofoam, they'll linger for hundreds of years.

How? Though each has its pros and cons, the main water bottle alternatives are aluminum (SIGG bottles), steel (Kleen Kanteen), and durable plastic (Nalgene). For coffee, most coffee shops sell mugs with their own labels (and often, discounts for using them), and any number of thermoses are available wherever you shop.

**3. Replace your incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescents (CFLs).**

Why? A typical lightbulb is amazingly inefficient - 80% or more of its energy creates heat rather than light. CFLs, on the other hand, produce light with much less electricity and last longer. Though they contain a tiny amount of mercury, and thus must be disposed of carefully, this mercury content is less than the mercury emitted by power plants producing the extra electricity to power an incandescent bulb. Though they cost more initially, they will make up for it in energy savings and longevity.

How? Next time a light burns out in your home, replace it with a CFL. They are widely available (at Home Depot, Target, etc.) in a variety of wattage levels and colors, and are even available specifically for dimmer switches and ceiling fans.

**4. Reduce your paper waste.**

Why? Though around half of our paper does get recycled, this does not negate the immense amount of paper that we could avoid using in the first place. Each American gets an average of 41 pounds of junk mail each year, so 20 pounds of it, if not more, ends up in the landfill, along with printer paper, newspapers, and everything else.

How? To reduce your junk mail, check out Catalog Choice, 41pounds.org, and Green Dimes, or, if you prefer the DIY approach, call catalog senders directly, call 888-5-OPTOUT to be removed from credit card offer lists, and register with the Direct Marketing Association to stop most national mailings. To thin out that stack of old bills and statements, switch to online banking and billing. It'll save paper, and some companies will even give you a credit or some sort of incentive to switch. Receipts are another paper product that many of us don't need: Next time you use the ATM, use your credit card at the gas pump, or are just asked if you want a receipt, say no unless you really need it. And, for the paper that you already have, recycle it, and don't forget to buy recycled!

**5. Green your diet: commit to organic, local, and/or vegetarian meals. Whether once a month, once a week, once a day, or completely.**

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### PHOTO GALLERIES



### DAILY QUESTION

**Most recent question:** Best Hamburger In Lakewood  
[Submit your answer and read others' answers](#)

### LAKWOOD WEATHER

Lakewood, OH  
 At 12:51 PM EST  
 Mostly Cloudy  
 18°F  
 SSW 12 MPH  
[www.weatherforyou.com](http://www.weatherforyou.com)

### EVENTS CALENDAR

January, 2009

				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

January, 2009

### UPCOMING EVENTS

January 19, 2009:

[6:00 AM - 7:00 AM - Adult Swim](#)

[1:00 PM - 3:00 AM - Open Swim](#)

[3:00 PM - 3:50 AM - Adult Swim](#)

[3:00 PM - 3:50 AM - Adult Swim](#)

January 20, 2009:

[2:00 PM - 3:00 AM - The Aging](#)

Why? Industrial food production and transport takes a huge toll on the environment, as land is degraded by pesticides, the air is polluted with fuel exhaust, and the conditions of animals on feedlots lead to illness and more pollution.

How? Though winter is a difficult time to start a local food challenge, any step in this direction will help. Organic foods are available at most supermarkets year round, as are, of course, non-meat options. Once spring and summer roll around again, consider shopping at local farmer's markets, using community-supported agriculture programs, or even growing your own produce.

#### 6. Change the thermostat.

Why? Heating and cooling make up a large percentage of home energy use each year, so any improvement in efficiency can mean big savings, in energy and dollars.

How? Get a programmable thermostat if you don't already have one. It will easily pay for itself before too long. Turn down the temperature at night and when no one will be home, and try turning the heat down one degree for a week or so and see how it feels. Keep going as much as you can - each degree will save you money on your heating bill. Check your windows and doors for drafts and seal them - this will not only keep the heat in during winter, but out during the summer.

#### 7. Walk or bike instead of driving. Once a week, once a day, whenever.

Why? The gasoline we put into our cars is another big part of many people's energy-related expenditures, as well as an important contributor to pollution.

How? Commit to walking or biking, or even carpooling or taking the bus, on short trips. Combining errands into one trip will also help. And when you do drive, drive greener - don't idle for longer than a few seconds, keep your tires inflated and your filters clean, and drive calmly (slow accelerations and decelerations and no speeding).

#### [Read More on Conservation Corner](#)

Volume 5, Issue 1, Posted 10:16 AM, 01.14.2009

#### [Eye: Conditions and Treatments](#)

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[2:50 PM - 3:50 AM - Adult Swim](#)

[7:00 PM - 8:45 AM - KNIT & LIT BOOK CLUB DOUBLE BIND BY CHRIS BOHJALIAN.](#)

January 21, 2009:

[6:00 AM - 7:00 AM - Adult Swim](#)

[2:50 PM - 3:50 AM - Adult Swim](#)

January 22, 2009:

[6:00 AM - 7:00 AM - Adult Swim](#)

[7:00 PM - 8:30 AM - Open Swim](#)

January 23, 2009:

[6:00 AM - 7:00 AM - Adult Swim](#)

[2:50 PM - 3:50 AM - Adult Swim](#)

[6:30 PM - 8:00 AM - LECPTA Open House: Bounce Off The Walls](#)

January 24, 2009:

[10:00 AM - 12:00 PM - GIRLS WITH WINGS: AVIATION INSPIRATION](#)

[2:00 PM - 4:00 PM - "Light Up Your Life" Happiness is Available, A Yoga Experience with Master Teacher Rowan Silverberg](#)

[2:00 PM - 3:00 AM - Adult Swim](#)

[3:00 PM - 5:00 AM - Kayak Open Roll](#)

[5:00 PM - Homeless Awareness Sleepout](#)

[7:00 PM - Family Music and More presents A Jungle Safari Show with Roger and Kathy DeVilla.](#)

January 25, 2009:

[2:00 PM - 3:00 AM - Sunday with the Friends-Cello-bration Quartet](#)

[2:00 PM - 4:00 AM - Open Swim](#)

January 26, 2009:

[6:00 AM - 7:00 AM - Adult](#)