

YOUR KIDS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

We live in a semi-rural area over by Percy Priest Lake, in Nashville. We decided to go for a walk. The scenery was beautiful. The trees were green and the air was fresh and clear. The birds were singing and all seemed to be well with the world. Then we looked down. Lying in the gutters all along the roadside, was trash. We wondered why people just toss their stuff out the windows without a thought about anything or anybody else.

I thought about my own upbringing. I don't remember a particular time when I had a lesson from my Dad about caring for the environment, but somewhere inside I knew that I would never ever be a litter bug. Every month or so my husband goes along our extensive road frontage and fills big trash sacks with bottles, cans and other trash that has been thrown onto our property. Where do these litter bugs come from? They come from homes where other litter bugs live. This is where they learned to be one.

I remember reading a true story in a New Zealand newspaper. A gas pump attendant was filling a customer's tank when the driver opened his window and emptied all his trash, cigarette butts and all, out on the ground. He then closed the window again. The attendant quietly swept it all into a little shovel and knocked on the car window. When the driver opened the window, the attendant said, 'Excuse me, Sir, I think you dropped this', and promptly threw the contents back into the car. YES! Now there is an interesting story.

What does it take to create a concern for our environment? We need to look at our own attitude as adults. Do we understand that trees, plants, and little greeblies are in our environment for a purpose? Everything is placed there to give us a greater quality of life. When we have an appreciation for our surroundings, then we can train our children to be the same.

A good way to teach our kids about caring for the environment is to allow them to plant a little garden or a tree. They should be responsible for looking after it and watching it grow. They will learn to protect it and water it. By understanding what it takes for those plants to grow, they will less likely thoughtlessly damage tree limbs, stand or ride over garden plants and such like. By taking your kids out in the community with trash bags periodically, they will get an appreciation of how much easier it is to put trash in cans in the first place, instead of just tossing their stuff out windows.

We also need to teach our kids that, not only are we responsible for dealing with our own trash, but also that of others. Brian used to supervise the school cafeteria. If he asked a child to pick up someone else's lunch trash, the response usually was 'I'm not picking that up. I never put it there'. Of course,

they did pick it up, but not before major protest.

The environment belongs to all of us. We need to care for and protect it – not just for ourselves but for future generations. Our kids are part of that future and their kids need to learn the same important value.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.