

Ask EcoGirl

By Patricia Dines

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Holiday Donations: Your Magic Wand for Planetary Change!

Dear EcoGirl: I want to include green organizations in my holiday giving (and maybe get a year-end tax break too). What groups should I contribute to? *Signed, Generous in Guerneville*

Dear Generous: What a smart question you ask! Yes, an essential way to help stop the ecological harm happening right now is by joining with others in taking constructive community-level action.

We're lucky that many groups near and far offer ways for us to collectively take on issues such as global warming, green energy, environmental health, sustainable economics, wise land use, and more. To support this work, group members read reports, attend meetings, uncover vital truths, hash out strategies, and identify effective actions. All this is usually done with shoestring budgets and donated skills. Yet how much worse would the world be without their efforts?

Giving even a small contribution to these groups (of money or time) can make a huge difference in their ability to take actions on the community's behalf. In return, you'll likely receive unexpected rewards, including camaraderie, a chance to use your talents, and a feeling of hope at seeing positive change in the world.

So, where do you start?

(1) Identify your passionate issue(s). What world problems do you most want to impact? What crises weigh on you, breaking your heart? In what arenas would you most delight at positive change? What solutions excite you?

If you haven't found your priority topic(s) yet, look at your current life

passions, talk to others about theirs', and see what ideas emerge.

(2) Find group(s) taking constructive action on those issues. Look for possibilities online, at events, and by talking with friends and experts.

(3) Explore ways you can contribute to your chosen group(s). Do they offer memberships, request donations, publish a periodical, or sell products? Do they invite volunteers or have projects you'd like to support? Consider making a New Year's resolution to give a certain amount of money or time each month to the community groups you want to see succeed. Remember, action is the best cure for despair about our planet's woes!

Note: Donations to some groups are tax-deductible, but not all. Ask each group for their designation.

A few of my local favorites

Many groups are doing great work; here are some local ones that I especially value.

Action for the earth overall. **Sonoma County Conservation Action** (<www.conservationaction.org> 571-8566), the county's largest environmental group, goes door-to-door to engage with people about key local issues. The **Sierra Club** (<www.redwood.sierraclub.org/sonoma> 544-7651) works for the environment both locally and nationally. Membership brings you their magazine, local newsletter, outings, and more. They also sell beautiful calendars. The **Sonoma County Conservation Council** (<www.envirocentersoco.org> 578-0595) gathers together information and groups at their Environmental Center. **Greenbelt Alliance** (<[\[greenbelt.org\]\(http://greenbelt.org\)> 823-2665\) is a powerful advocate for the Bay Area's vibrant open spaces. For inspiration, check out **Daily Acts** \(<\[www.daily-acts.org\]\(http://www.daily-acts.org\)> 789-9664\) and their Ripples Journal and Sustainability Tours.](http://www.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Action on specific eco-topics. The nationally-recognized **Climate Protection Campaign** (<www.climateprotectioncampaign.org> 823-2665) is encouraging bold action to reduce Sonoma County's impact on the climate. Both the **Russian Riverkeeper** (<www.russianriverkeeper.org> 433-1958) and **Coastwalk** (<www.coastwalk.org> 829-6689) educate and act to protect our local waters. The **Sonoma Land Trust** (<www.sonoma-landtrust.org> 526-6930) conserves land far into the future. Even athletes can come together for the earth through **OrganicAthlete** (<www.organicathlete.org> 360-8511).

Sustainable food and agriculture. To support small farms offering local fresh food, consider donating to the **Community Alliance with Family Farmers** (<www.caff.org> 824-1465). Also, the **Sonoma County Herb Association** (<www.sonomaherbs.org> 522-8500), and its Herb Exchange, encourage natural healing and sustainable herb farming, which is an ecological and economically-competitive alternative to wine monocropping.

Want more group leads? Search by category at the **Bay Area Progressive Directory** (<www.bapd.org>). You can also contact the **Volunteer Center of Sonoma County** (<www.volunteer-now.org> 573-3399) for help finding volunteer opportunities that match your interests and skills.

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I hope this sampling of the wonderful groups taking action inspires you to support your favorites in creating a better world for us all!

Ask EcoGirl is written by Patricia Dines, Author of The Organic Guides, and Editor and Lead Writer for The Next STEP newsletter. Email your questions about going green to <EcoGirl@AskEcoGirl.info> for possible inclusion in future columns. View past columns at <www.AskEcoGirl.info>. Also contact EcoGirl for information about carrying this syndicated column in your periodical. "EcoGirl believes that everyone can be a superhero for the planet. Then she shows you how!"

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Turn Your Trash Into Another's Treasure

This holiday season be sure to pass along what you no longer need to those who can use it. For instance, for every dollar earned at The Salvation Army store (575-7320), 83¢ "goes directly to restoring lives" in their Adult Rehabilitation Center. You can donate clothes, furniture, appliances, bikes, household goods, toys, and

cars. For other places to donate items for reuse, look at the Yellow Pages under Thrift Shops and Recycling, and see <www.recycle now.org>. The latter two resources also give information about discarding waste responsibly, including those now supplanted techno-

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