

Change comes in little steps

by MARLA NEWHOOK



Many times during the school year, I dread opening the kids' school bags for fear of getting bad test results, which I have to sign, or permission slips for school trips, for which I have to write yet another cheque.

However, nothing sends me over the edge more than those fundraising forms obliging parents to pawn pounds of chocolate onto their friends and families. Or maybe it's cookie dough or entertainment guides.

I realize schools need to raise money for various activities or supplies and generally pick up the financial slack. But, ultimately, the burden falls in your lap to move the merchandise for the betterment of your kids' school.

Some parents just write the cheque and consume the chocolate bars over the ensuing weeks. Or maybe it ends up at the office, where co-workers are obligated to support the cause because they know it'll be beneficial for them when it's their turn.

My kids enjoy going door to door to sell their quota of chocolate. I'm not sure, however, how much my neighbours enjoy it.

When I heard of eCause Canada Inc., based in the West Island, my interest was piqued because one of its components is a school fundraising program selling eco-friendly products, like stainless steel water bottles, natural soaps, reusable grocery bags and bamboo products.

One of the reasons my husband and I chose bamboo flooring for our home when we renovated last year was because it's a terrific renewable resource and it's extremely durable. Judging from the workout it gets from two active children and one very rambunctious puppy, I'd have to say it's held up to the test.

Dollard des Ormeaux resident Joyce Shanks, the founder of eCause Canada, has developed a unique idea that strikes a balance between becoming more environmentally responsible and supporting your school. It's an opportunity to ease our collective conscience about the carbon footprint we're leaving on this planet, which will be inherited by the very people we're supporting – our children.

Shanks is a wife, mother, holistic healer and self-proclaimed tree-hugger. Her eco-friendly fundraiser idea stems from her experience as a regular participant in the annual walk "Montreal's Weekend to End Breast Cancer," where she noticed an alarming number of plastic water bottles. There is heated controversy over plastics and its alleged link to cancer, but Shanks is adamantly convinced that the link does indeed exist and that plastic is just one of many environmental liabilities that poses a danger to our overall health.

I could fill volumes about what I don't know about dioxins, endocrine disrupters and their effects on our biological system, but I urge you to do your own research and come to your own conclusions.

Instead of swimming against the tide of popular belief, become the tide that influences how others think and react. That change can begin where we have the most influence; in our homes and in our schools

Obviously the world cannot be changed overnight, but as Shanks puts it, it's a matter of chipping at the traditional way of thinking and educating ourselves little by little.