



North Columbia Environmental Society Green Business Award

D's Helping Hands

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This is the last of our green business awards. The North Columbia Environmental Society has been pleased to celebrate great businesses in Revelstoke, and looks forward to giving you a continuation of this series next year. The last award goes to, drum role please; D's Helping Hands. Debi Fraser started her cleaning business with a focus on toxic free products and wise choices for herself and the environment.

What makes your business 'green'?

I try to use all non-toxic products. Nowadays everything is getting weird; our weather, our food, everything. I feel like each little thing we as individuals can do is worth it. When cleaning a client's home I also sort all waste so that I can recycle it. I take bottles back for them; I even break up their cereal boxes so that I can take them to the cardboard recycling drop off. I just want to do something that makes me feel good, and something that makes me part of the solution not the problem.

What inspired you to do business in this way?

With the new resort, I decided to start a business that could fill a niche. More often than not, seasonal renters aren't responsible for their waste, and I decided I could do well with a cleaning business that would be environmentally friendly at every level. My main clientele now is tourists and our seniors.

When cleaning rentals I know I divert a lot from the landfill. It is stuff that would otherwise just be chucked out. I take the time to recycle as I clean. Seniors on the other hand are a bit different, they are more into recycling but they do have concerns about toxins in their home, especially those of concern to their pets.

What are some of the challenges you face being eco friendly?

When cleaning ovens there is nothing that really does a good job except the very caustic oven cleaners, to combat this I always wear gloves and a mask. Some homes that I clean have been rented for years and have years of accumulated grime. I have to use products with trisodium phosphate, it is all that will work. You might think the bathtub would be the worst, but baking soda works the best out of any cleaner and there are no fumes for me to breathe nor chemicals down the drain.

What has your customer response been?

Really good, a couple of clients are heli-guides, and they contacted me because of my eco-friendly policy. It caught their eye, and is very appealing to them. They want to do the right thing and are grateful to have the option.

So what exactly is lurking under the kitchen sink? You may be thinking that commercial cleaning products are safe. Sadly this isn't the case because repeated exposure to your floor polish, oven cleaner, carpet cleaner, window cleaner or air freshener has a cumulative impact. Washing away a product most often doesn't rid your house of the toxins. Many of the toxins found in these products are bio-accumulative, meaning the chemicals do not purge easily from the body and over time even mild exposures can add up to toxic levels. Most products bear the warning "Keep Out of Reach of Children." As consumers, we believe that if our children don't ingest these products they will not be harmed by them. Consider though that the most common methods of exposure are through the skin and respiratory tract. Children are frequently in contact with the chemical residues that house cleaning products leave behind, by crawling and sitting on the freshly cleaned floor. Children frequently put their fingers in their mouths, increasing risks for exposure. Furthermore, children are more at risk because they have a smaller weight but absorb just as much as an adult. For many of these same reasons, pets are also at risk. Other populations with a pronounced risk are breast cancer victims, the elderly, and asthma sufferers. The three essential categories into which most of the hazardous ingredients in household cleaning products fall are:

Carcinogens – Carcinogens cause cancer and/or promote cancer's growth.

Endocrine disruptors – Endocrine disruptors mimic human hormones. Exposure to them can lead to health concerns including reproductive, developmental, growth and behavior problems. Endocrine disruptors have been linked to reduced fertility, premature puberty, miscarriage, menstrual problems, abnormal prostate size, ADHD, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and certain cancers.

Neurotoxins – Neurotoxins alter neurons, affecting brain activity, causing a range of problems from headaches to loss of intellect.