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Students make dorms eco-smart

By SARAH HARSTE
For the Herald-Journal

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Shekeyse Jones chooses a greener way to travel to class.

The 19-year-old Converse College student hops on her bicycle.

Jones rents a bike from Partners for Active Living to save on gas and help the environment. She also does her part by avoiding hair spray that emits harmful gases.

To save water, she uses a simple trick. "I always try to turn off the water when I'm brushing my teeth," Jones said.

Like Jones, Spartanburg's Upstate Forever program manager Ned Barrett said there are "so many really simple things" students or anyone can do to be more eco-friendly. Upstate Forever is concerned with active living and building a green initiative in Spartanburg.

Barrett suggests buying Energy Star appliances as an easy way to go green. Students can buy anything from a refrigerator to a stereo that has an Energy Star sticker, which means it meets government criteria for saving energy.

Even if you don't have an Energy Star product, there are ways to cut energy use on electronics.

Wofford College student Tomas Moreno, 19, suggests keeping the refrigerator fully stocked so it is as efficient as possible. He also unplugs his microwave and coffee maker when he is not using them.

According to Barrett, the Department of Energy estimates that 25 percent of the energy used to power appliances is spent when the appliance is not being used. Barrett says this unused energy is called a "phantom load."

"It's energy that's going into the appliance that isn't being used for any real purpose," Barrett said.

He suggests plugging appliances into a power strip so all the electronics can easily be turned off when they are not in use.

Moreno also goes to public places around campus, such as the library, to study instead of using his room. That way he's using lights that are already on.

"When I was a kid," Barrett said, "If I left the room and left the light on, I heard about it (from my parents)."

Another tip that Barrett encourages is using windows wisely.

"If it's summertime, leave (your windows) up at night, but down during the day. Same with the blinds," Barrett said.

"If it's winter, leave those shades up so you get that heat."

Barrett also suggests putting the computer in sleep mode when it is not being used.

Krista Jones, a 19-year-old Wofford College student, uses the search engine www.blackle.com to save energy. She says this is equivalent to Google, except that it uses less energy because it has a black background. "It also helps to conserve more of your laptop's battery," she said.

Barrett believes it's ultimately up to the students to help the environment.

"If your dorm doesn't have recycling, get it set up by talking to student services," Barrett said.

He says that students should encourage one another to save energy, such as through leaving a note reminding their roommate to turn off the lights.

"Don't be afraid to be the energy police," Barrett said.

Making the dorm a greener place

- Use fluorescent light bulbs instead of incandescent.
- Decrease water use with a low flow shower head.
- Lose the plug-in air freshener and invest in air freshener spray instead.
- Try reusable plates and silverware instead of disposable.
- Use a power strip so you can turn off all your appliances at once when you aren't

using them.

- Make sure you're always washing a full load of laundry.
- Always take a cloth bag with you on trips to the store.
- Invest in a water bottle that you can refill instead of buying bottled water.
- Put your computer in hibernate mode when it is not in use.
- Turn off the lights in empty rooms and when you leave.

Source: Wofford College students

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