



Thank You Somerset Environmentalists! Yes, There Is More Work to Do!



As we all know, there are many troubling things going on in the country and the world. It is important to note, however, that the new Biden administration has promised many

positive environmental initiatives that will “build back better.” These initiatives will result in infrastructure for renewable energy, produce 500,000 EV charging stations, encourage a focus on environmental racism, and create more jobs to assist the unemployed, underserved and fossil fuel industry workers who need to be retrained.

The Black Lives Matter movement has been a particular focus for Somerset, with numerous BLM signs as well as John Lewis “Make Good Trouble” signs. All these signs (and parachutes) tell us that we are not only thinking about

issues of equality, but are *speaking out* about them. And many neighbors are doing more than displaying signs. Some are assisting with Montgomery County’s Climate Action Plan. Others are working and volunteering at other non-profits and government jobs focused both on these issues and on the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.

I would like to give a big thank you to Town residents for their efforts. We all know that every act, large or small, makes a difference and helps to move the needle toward a more sustainable future. Have a wonderful spring listening to the birds and waiting for the cicadas to arrive!

Send your comments and questions to:
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To Your Health

By Diane Horn, Certified Wellness Coach, Chair,
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As we begin to unmask and gather in social groups, it’s a good time to go through drawers and throw out products that have been sitting there for the last year, check expiration dates, and ready yourself for outdoor activities with safe protective sunscreen.

A big part of wellness is being proactive through the choices you make. No one likes reading labels but it is empowering to know what to look for and what to avoid.*

Many of you may be aware of the **Environmental Working Group (ewg.org)** or EWG for short. It is a nonprofit organization dedicated to studying the ingredients in commonly used consumer products and evaluating their toxicity through scientific study. For instance they publish a list of *the dirty dozen produce* items that one should avoid and instead buy organic. There is also a list of the *clean fifteen produce* items that can be eaten safely.

Their **Sunscreen Guide** rates sunscreens on the basis of safe ingredients as well as effectiveness. Most of us buy a higher numerical SPF product thinking it is more beneficial.

This isn’t always the case and in fact it may lure us into thinking we don’t need to reapply sunscreen as often. There is also a difference between chemically based and mineral based products. There are hundreds of sunscreen products available in drugstores, markets and doctor’s offices. It’s tempting to just grab one based on SPF, but I recommend being an educated consumer first.

EWG has a database called **Skin Deep** which rates cosmetics and skin care products based on toxic ingredients as well. You may wonder what could possibly be harmful about makeup and the answers might astound you. Your skin is the largest organ in the body and anything you put on it will be absorbed. The European Union has banned many of the ingredients used in our cosmetics. In fact U.S. companies have had to reformulate their products to meet the standards overseas.

**Disclaimer — any recommendations are not official Town of Somerset recommendations.*