Plastic is the most versatile material in the modern world, but the same thing that makes plastic so useful is what makes it so terrible—it never goes away. So, how can we break our addiction to this “easy” material and switch to a more sustainable way of life instead? Purchasing “biodegradable” and “recyclable” items may help, but most of them don’t live up to their promise. They also don’t address the fundamental problem: our throwaway culture. Part of the solution must be to use less disposable plastic in the first place, swapping the plastic products that we use every day for eco-friendly products.

Begin with one area of your life where you can make the swap. Start with the things you use daily. Give up plastic bags. Take your own reusable ones to the store. A trillion plastic shopping bags are used worldwide every year. That’s 100 billion in the United States alone—almost one per American per day. This goes for the plastic bags for vegetables and fruits as well. Dirt is a lot easier to wash off than the damage we are doing to our planet. Skip straws. Americans toss 500 million plastic straws every day, or about 1.5 per person. Carry a reusable water bottle with you. It takes up to 1,000 years for every single plastic bottle to decompose. Studies show that the toxins decomposing bottles of water leach into our environment cause a variety of health issues, including reproductive problems and cancer.

The question is not whether we need to aspire to be eco-friendlier, it is how we can be more environmentally conscious in a world where we are constantly tempted by single-use plastic. Let us envision our Earth as a living, spiritual organism, one that will not survive and support us if things continue the way they are. The goal of spirituality is to not withdraw in self-centered silence, but to open our hearts in compassion and devotion to the Divine, our fellow beings, all living organisms and our ecosystem.

Why not use your purchasing power for good, and utilize the many eco-friendly alternatives that exist today? The source of the planet’s healing lies in the choices we make every day. Where we spend each dollar is a vote for or against efforts to protect our natural resources. If our dollar is our vote, and corporations are following our dollar (which they are), then purchase power is a form of activism. Being a conscious consumer means we hold the power to support the development of new values in a fast-changing social climate. The economy is dictated by trends, and we get to decide what those trends are. Our responsibility is to make sustainability a permanent trend that drives those industry standards forward.

We must also expedite the mission of finding more natural alternatives to plastics that are environmentally friendly, sustainable, cost-effective and convenient. In this transition, the most-needed step is to educate people in a larger vision of life, with a reverence and respect for nature. Traditionally, nature has been adored; mountains, rivers, trees, the sun, the moon and the five elements have all been attributed divine qualities. In fact, ancient cultures all over the world have exhibited a similar deep respect for Nature. Today it has become necessary to free the human mind from stress and greed and to nurture Nature. There are no more excuses. It is time to act.

- Abbey Koshak

(Abbey snorkeling in the Pacific Ocean, Hawai’i. Abbey encountered a current line that brought in a lot of trash. Abbey is wearing a recycled wet suit from Kassia Surf.)
Photo Credit: Devin Hume
Changes in season also bring changes to Waterspirit, and we are very pleased to announce our new Program Manager, Abbey Koshak. Abbey joins us from the Big Island of Hawai‘i, where she worked as the Social Media Director for the television show, Everything Hawai‘i – Adventures with Kawika Singson. She has also served as a naturalist on board various tourist vessels and as an environmental educator focusing on ocean conservation. She has contributed to various conservation projects, including most recently the Global Micro Plastics Initiative. Abbey has also worked as a producer, production coordinator and set photographer for various films, where she emphasized the importance of ‘eco-friendly’ atmospheres on set and encouraged the elimination of single-use plastics.

“I am a child of the Earth, and grew up on a campground in Southern Colorado surrounded by nature. The desert will always hold a special place in my heart, but it is the ocean and water that ignite my spirit. I was delighted when I discovered the Waterspirit community, and I am excited to join this dynamic team.”

Waterspirit Welcomes
New Program Manager
Abbey Koshak

Winter Appeal

“The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.” – Thomas Berry

Waterspirit changes hearts and minds in order to change how human beings relate to Earth. Help us restore balance to our home by making a tax-deductible, year-end donation to Waterspirit today! Donations by credit card can be made at www.waterspirit.org/donate. Checks made out to Waterspirit can be mailed to 4 E. River Road, Rumson, NJ 07760.

In Honor of Suzanne Golas, CSJP
Paulette Giraud
Virginia Bell

Waterspirit has beautifully printed “In Honor of” and “In Memory of” Cards that help you give a card while making a donation in support of Waterspirit.
If you would like more information on the cards, please call or email us. We will be happy to mail you some cards!

DROPLETS

“You are not Atlas, carrying the world on your shoulder – it is good to remember that the planet is carrying you.” – Vandana Shiva

♦ Beef generates 20 times more greenhouse gas emissions than beans per gram of protein. OMD (One Meal a Day...of plant based eating) is not only encouraging people to eat a more plant based diet – it’s also changing the food system to improve access to healthy food options across the country. (from www.happyecoliving.com)

♦ Italy will become the first country to make studying climate change compulsory for all students – 33 hours per year – 1 hour per week.

♦ Tesla Model 3 is the first 100% electric taxi approved by NYC.

♦ Dove announces it will use plastic free soap bottles beginning in the end of 2019.

♦ Compostable plates made from banana leaves launched by Bio Plant, a Peruvian group, promise to reduce our dependence on plastics – It can make a huge impact on the environment as pollution from single use plastic dominates the waste that has covered our land and engulfed our oceans.

♦ It is estimated that 500 million single use plastic straws are used and thrown away every day in the U.S. alone as Americans use them at an average rate of 1.5 straws per person per day according to the National Park Service. That translates into 175 billion straws a year. Reusable steel straws are an eco-friendly alternative.

“Water is life. It’s the shiny broth of our origins, the pounding circulatory system of the world. We stake our civilizations on the coasts and mighty rivers. Our deepest dread is the threat of having too little – or too much.” – Barbara Kingsolver
Celebrating “Waves of Gratitude” for Suzanne Golas, CSJP
Founder of Waterspirit

Blair Nelsen, Executive Director of Waterspirit and Jean-Marie Donohue, Assistant Director of Waterspirit have recently become part-time Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Representatives to the United Nations (UN) for the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. Blair and Jean-Marie join Frank McCann, CSJP-A, who is the Peace through Justice Facilitator with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, and who leads as the part-time NGO Representative for the Congregation at the UN. As NGO representatives for the Congregation, their role is to bring their experience, learnings and the charism of the Congregation to the meetings at the United Nations - gathered from their grass roots experience in doing their work. That grass roots experience for Blair and Jean-Marie includes advocacy for the Care for Creation and the right to clean safe water. The Congregation’s affiliation at the United Nations as a NGO member of the Department of Global Communications (DGC) brings responsibilities to communicate to our audiences and community the goals, programs and initiatives of the UN. So - look for upcoming articles, learnings and initiatives from Blair and Jean-Marie’s involvement at the United Nations. Their hope is that this added responsibility will enhance and further the Waterspirit Mission, which is also a Ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace.
“Winter Solstice” Join us for an evening of ritual and refreshments as we celebrate the return of the sun. The SomaSonder Dancers are featured. Reservations are preferred. RSVP at water@waterspirit.org, or call 732-923-9788. Donations according to means. For more information visit www.waterspirit.org

“Book Club” Join us for discussion, exploring and sharing as we read enlightening books that move our spirituality to action and enhance our connection with nature and all life. We are currently reading Unsheltered by Barbara Kingsolver. Our next meeting is Monday, December 9.

“Drumming for Water is Life” We will be praying and drumming for the Water is Life Movement on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. Join us in solidarity, prayer and drumming for all who are actively trying to STOP new destructive fossil fuel infrastructure, and those who are advocating for a just transition to renewable energy sources. We will continue to pray to protect Mother Earth and the lands, people, water and sacred sites from the devastation of fossil fuel infrastructure. Drumming will be led by Tommy & Abby Anton and John Shambuh Eustor.

“Meditation for Earth” Join us for a contemplative prayer for Earth, music and silence. “The environmental challenge that we are experiencing and its human causes, affects us all and demands our response.” -Pope Francis.

For reservations or information on these programs or WATERSPIRIT, please contact us at water@waterspirit.org or (732) 923-9788.
Clockwise from top left to right: Assistant Director, Jean-Marie Donohue, speaks at the NESE Rally in Red Bank; Greta Thunberg talks at the Global Climate Strike in Battery Park, NYC; Executive Director, Blair Nelsen, leads the Autumn Equinox; Tara Viscito, Suzanne Golas, and Kathy Coyle celebrate together; Blair tracks litter found on the beach; Program Manager, Abbey Koshak, Noah and Blair at a Clean Ocean Action beach clean-up; a peaceful moment near the Navesink; Sr. Sheila Lemieux, CSJP and Barbara Hrubecyk smile for the camera; the Waterspirit team celebrates Halloween, Joan Carey, SSJ and Joan Blake are all smiles; 10 Mile March for a Moratorium; Drumming for Water is Life is back for the season; Dolores Kirby, Diane Burke, Barbara Sheeden and Meredith Brown say ‘cheese’; Deborah Siebelist, Jean-Marie, and Rosanne Monroe hard at work.
Eco-Friendly Gift Guide

Plastic is everywhere, especially around the holidays. Make the switch this year to give plastic-free items your friends and family will love!

Make Your Own Gifts

Nothing is as thoughtful as a homemade gift. Cut back on waste and push back against the frenzied consumerism of festive buying. DIY ideas can range from cards to desserts, so let your imagination run wild and have fun being extra thoughtful this season.

Buy Local, Second Hand or Antique

Support your local economy and stop imports by buying gifts from local stores. Look for unique items as special as the person you are gifting to.

Experiences vs. Things

Classes, spa days, memberships, subscriptions and donations to charities are all great ways to show you care and give less “stuff” and more memories.

Plants

Whether it’s an interesting houseplant, a fruit bush or a tree, giving plants is a wonderful way to give a ‘greener’ gift.

Waterspirit Gear

We have recycled cotton T-shirts, canvas tote bags (bye-bye plastic bags!) and water bottles to make your eco-friendly gift giving as easy as 1,2,3.

A sustainable holiday does not have to mean no presents and no fancy food but, when it comes to eco-gifting, usefulness and sustainability are the name of the game. If you order online, it doesn’t hurt to ask for plastic-free shipping options in the comments of your order—you never know who might happily comply. Whatever you decide, make a point this holiday season to spend some quality time with the ones you love, as time is possibly the best eco-friendly gift you can give.

Winter Solstice

Thursday, December 19th
7:00pm—8:30pm

Join us for an evening of ritual and refreshments as we celebrate the return of the sun. The SomaSonder Dancers are featured. Reservations are preferred. RSVP at water@waterspirit.org, or call 732-923-9788. Donations according to means.

Save paper! Sign up to receive Waterspirit’s e-mail newsletter instead of our print newsletter. The content is the same—only greener! To sign up today, please call or e-mail us at (732) 923-9788 or water@waterspirit.org.

If you no longer wish to receive these newsletters, please notify us by phone or e-mail.

A Winter Prayer

As the sun dims in evening, the stars shine through the night.
As the day dims in winter, our inner fires shine bright.
In the yearly cold we share the fire of our hearts, our birthright.
May your winter be warmed by the love of all hearts, until the returning of the light.
— Blair Nelsen

A sustainable holiday does not have to mean no presents and no fancy food but, when it comes to eco-gifting, usefulness and sustainability are the name of the game. If you order online, it doesn’t hurt to ask for plastic-free shipping options in the comments of your order—you never know who might happily comply. Whatever you decide, make a point this holiday season to spend some quality time with the ones you love, as time is possibly the best eco-friendly gift you can give.

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