

# GREENING YOUR SPA

what's good for business is good for the environment

**T**he subject of global warming, reducing greenhouse gases and limiting your carbon footprint are important issues not only for the environment but for your skin care or spa business as well. Many of you have seen or heard about former vice president Al Gore's movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, which contributed to his being awarded the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize. The focus of the film is to highlight the dangers of global warming and the need for each of us to take action to help save our planet. Dramatic words, yes. But the problem is very real. More and more of your clients are concerned about global warming. You can focus on their concerns

as well as do the right thing by making your spa and med-spa more environmentally responsible. Publicize your efforts and you are bound to create a competitive advantage.

Operating an environmentally responsible business can help reduce your operating costs, thereby making the business more profitable by conserving resources and reducing waste. Most of the suggestions that follow are not rocket science but rather common sense. There are also a myriad of community resources available at little or no cost to help you accomplish your green goals. With the ever increasing cost of energy and record oil prices, it pays to go green. ➔

BY ROB AND CAROL TROW

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### Plenty of resources

One place to start is your local utility company. Its staff will come to your site and conduct a free energy audit that provides a list of specific ideas that can help reduce your energy costs. Usually, they will also be able to offer you energy efficient products such as light bulbs, insulations and retro-fitting of heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems at attractive, subsidized rates with low cost financing and tax credits. Look for and take advantage of financial and tax incentives.

A helpful second stop is online informational resources such as the federal government's Energy Star at [www.energystar.gov/smallbiz](http://www.energystar.gov/smallbiz). The site has links to state and local resources to help save operating costs including assistance in purchasing energy efficient equipment. Another valuable website is [www.greenbiz.com](http://www.greenbiz.com), which has a plethora of directories, websites, links and database search information.

Take the time to understand how your business affects the environment. Begin by making changes that can be done profitably or, at the minimum, not increase your costs. Going

green can make you more profitable, not less. Take small steps. Do not try to do it all at once. Each little action can lead to the next—a gradual, incremental approach works best. Understand that it is not possible to do everything right.

### Spread the word

Let your clients and staff know that you are greening, and why. Use this as a way to create a strategic advantage and to distinguish yourself from others. Doing the right thing does not have to cost you money.

You may have heard the term carbon footprint but may not be sure what it means or how to calculate it. Most of the tasks we conduct in the normal course of our business and personal life generate carbon emissions. These emissions accelerate global warming and climate change. The total amount of greenhouse gases you and your business produce, which are measured in units of carbon dioxide, are referred to as your carbon footprint. If we all took steps to reduce our carbon footprint, there would be a drastic reduction of these harmful greenhouse gases. If you would like to calculate your spa's carbon footprint go to <http://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx> for a simple form to complete.

Environmentally friendly actions to green your company do not have to be large. Many small steps create measurable and sustainable positive changes. Draft a company policy on environmental responsibility—a kind of ecovision statement. Post it in and around your spa for all to see. This will show your clients and staff your intentions to be a responsible and positive force in helping to solve the world's global warming problem.

The following are some ideas that can help green your business and that can also be used as marketing points as you present your spa to the public as being environmentally green friendly.

### Environmentally responsible tasks

One of the single most productive and effective actions you can take to help green our world is to plant trees, as doing so naturally and significantly reduces greenhouse gases. A single tree absorbs one ton of polluting carbon dioxide during its lifetime. Affiliating yourself with nonprofit organizations that plant trees is worthwhile. Look for a local organization in your community with

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whom to partner. Think about developing a program that you can publicize that donates funds to plant a tree for a particular service or purchase.

Have a goal to plant 1,000 trees or whatever number is required to allow you to mitigate any greenhouse gases you produce. Combine the planting of trees program with steps you are taking to reduce the production of carbon dioxide so you can boast to your clients, the community and the world that you are a practice that does not contribute to global warming.

Turning off all equipment when it is not being used yields a savings of 25 percent, although most equipment left in the off position still use up electricity. Turning off all computers at the end of the day will save 50 percent of their energy consumption. These actions can save 10,000 pounds of greenhouse gases annually.

Conduct a water audit. Make sure there are no leaking water taps. One drop of water per second wastes 10,000 quarts per year. Just think of all the droughts we are experiencing in the United States and worldwide. Install flow restrictors or aerators on all water spouts. Each

low flow valve installed on a hot water tap saves 350 pounds of carbon dioxide per year. Doing laundry on the warm rather than the hot cycle saves 500 pounds of carbon dioxide. Make all toilets low-flow by retrofitting them. These are all very low cost measures you can take.

Changing light bulbs to compact low energy bulbs saves 150 pounds of CO<sup>2</sup> pollution per year for each light switched to low energy. Think about installing occupant sensors that turn on lights when someone enters the room, upgrade ballasts on florescent light fixtures and use timers on appliances and lights. These changes more often than not pay for themselves in a month or two. Many are also provided free or at a subsidized cost by your local utility company.

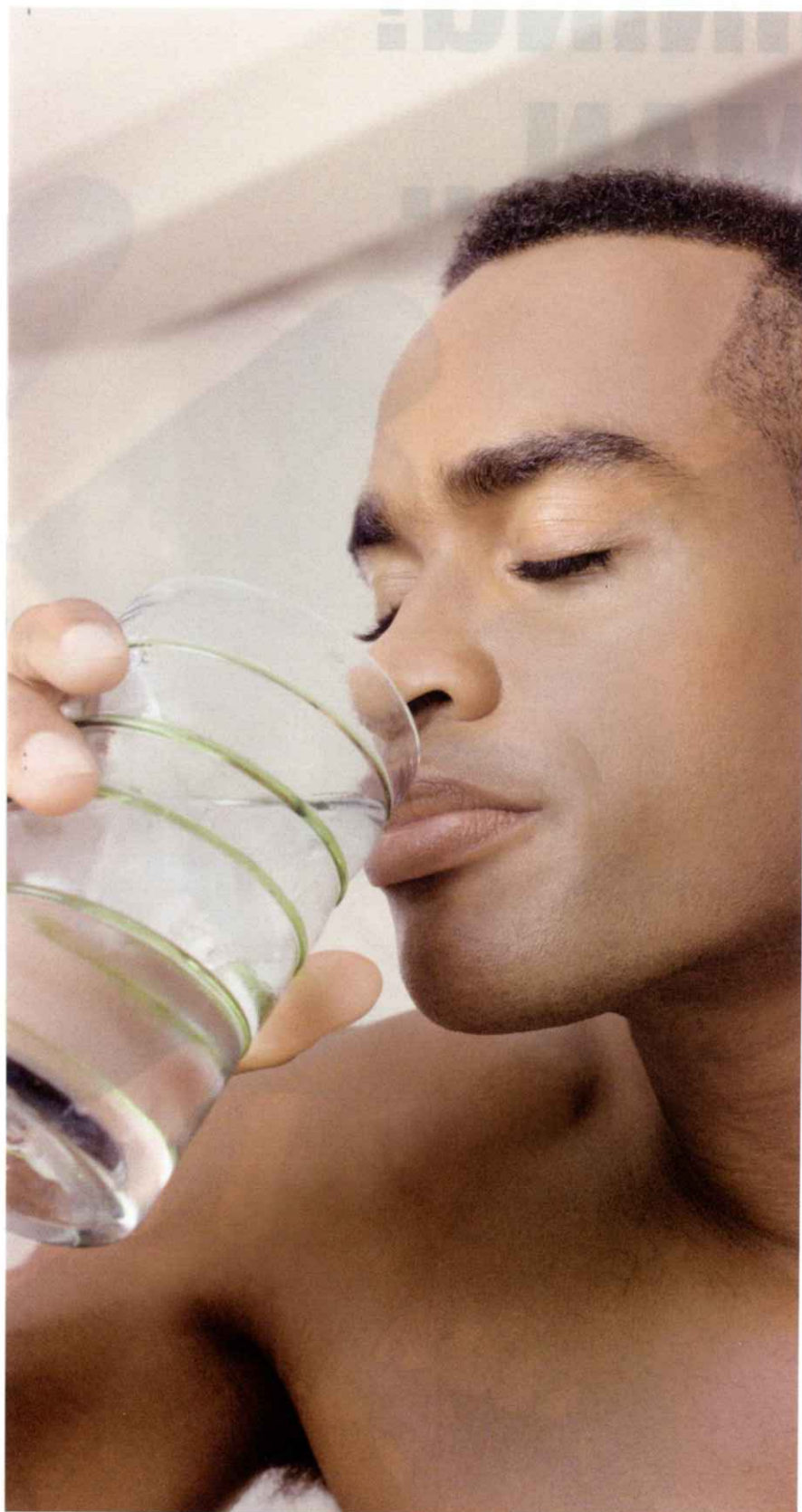
### Small changes mean a lot

If you can find a way to move your thermostat down two degrees in the winter and up two degrees in the summer, you may reduce pollution production by no less than one ton. Look to purchase products that do not come with superfluous packaging. This is extraordinarily wasteful in both the energy needed to produce the packaging and the cost of disposing of it. Just reducing packaging waste by 10 percent at your spa can reduce another ton of pollutants from entering the atmosphere. Ask your staff and clients to check their cars' tire pressure.

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Think about changing from paper cups, plates and plastic utensils to reusable ones.



Properly inflated tires reduce gas consumption by three percent. Saving a gallon of gas eliminates 20 pounds of CO<sup>2</sup>.

Look to buy paper and packaging that have the highest concentration of recycled contents. You should easily be able to find paper that has no less than 30 to 50 percent recycled content or even 100 percent. Ask your suppliers to make sure you are not buying paper that has been bleached with chlorine. Use paper in place of plastic bags.

Think about changing from paper cups, plates and plastic utensils to reusable ones. Collect used paper separately for recycling. Establish a trash recycling and reuse program whenever possible. Look to stock your restrooms and shower areas with post consumer recycled products. Let your clients and patients know what you are doing and why with posted information. Make it a positive action that clients can respect.

Ask your suppliers to let you know what they are doing to reduce their emission of greenhouse gases. Seek out ecofriendly cleaning and laundry products. There are now even inks, toners and the like that are environmentally friendly.

Get your staff involved in offering suggestions as well as monitoring your practice's ecofriendly efforts. Create your own green team. And last but certainly not least, seek recognition for all of your efforts. Do not be shy. Market your ecofriendly business to gain public relations coverage and new clients as you would a new product or service. ■

**Rob and Carol Trow**, his wife, own DermaConcepts USA, the eastern U.S. (excluding metro NYC) distributors for Environ® Skin Care. Rob's background includes two decades in higher education as a faculty member, administrator and business consultant. He has been in the skin care field for more than ten years. Prior to her involvement with Environ® Skin Care, Carol served as an RN, director of marketing for Professional Service Business Development and operated her own consulting firm focusing on practice development. Rob is an authority in the business of skin care and has authored articles for professional publications. He speaks frequently on current and emerging topics of interest to medical spas, estheticians and physicians.

