

**Dotsie Bregel,  
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(NABBW)**



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Decorating, and Entertaining***

*With*

**Diane MacEachern**

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## I'm Dreaming of a **GREEN** Christmas – *Shopping, Decorating, and Entertaining*

With  
Diane MacEachern

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**Dotsie:** Hello and welcome to the call. The format for the call is simply that I will interview Diane MacEachern, who is the author of, "**Big Green Purse: Use Your Spending Power to Create a Cleaner, Greener World.**" Today's topic is "going green" for Christmas.

For those of you who don't know me, I am **Dotsie Bregel**, founder of the **National Association of Baby Boomer Women** which can be found at [www.NABBW.com](http://www.NABBW.com) and also, [www.boomerwomenspeak.com](http://www.boomerwomenspeak.com), which are the number one sites on major search engines for baby boomer women. I am passionate about educating and empowering boomer women which happens to be my generation.

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Alright, let's get started. I'd like to introduce Diane; are you there Diane?

**Diane:** I am here. Thanks for having me.

**Dotsie:** Oh thank you for being with us. I appreciate it. Diane MacEachern is a best-selling, environmental writer, sought after public speaker, and founder of [www.biggreenpurse.com](http://www.biggreenpurse.com) which has received major media attention since its launch in early 2007. She has advised the Environmental Protection Agency, World Bank, World Wildlife Fund, and many other agencies and nonprofit organizations focused on protecting the planet. She's also the author of best selling, ***Save Our Planet: 750 Everyday Ways You Can Help Clean Up the Earth***. What year did you write that book? Do you recall?

**Diane:** Yes, that was 1990.

**Dotsie:** Yeah, because I remember giving that book to one of my kids at Christmas time many years ago. She lives in a Washington DC suburb, in an energy-efficient home that she helped design and build more than twenty years ago. So I would have to say you were way ahead of your time, Diane.

**Diane:** Well, you know, it was just always an issue that was near and dear to my heart.

**Dotsie:** And why was that? Was there any reason in particular?

**Diane:** You know; it probably has to do with the way I grew up. I grew up in Southeastern Michigan in a Detroit suburb, and so I was surrounded by the Great Lakes. We had a lot of natural beauty that we could connect to, but when I was growing up, there was also a lot of environmental challenges, so the lakes were getting terribly polluted. There was a lot of air pollution in Detroit at the time. And I just remember one afternoon going to a beach, Sunday afternoon with my family, we were all going to the lake for a picnic, and the lake was closed because it had gotten so polluted. I don't think I ever forgot those things. As I grew up and became an adult, it really, you know, all those issues came back to remind me that there was something we could do about it.

**Dotsie:** Good for you. I just think it's great that you were so on this topic, so many years ago, because it's getting bigger and bigger every day. I mean I am online all the time and forever seeing things about going green; which is such a great thing. I'm just excited that more baby boomer women are becoming even more involved than they once were trying to figure out more specific ways, you know, to help save our environment. Do you want to tell us a little bit about your

book: **Big Green Purse: Use Your Spending Power to Create a Cleaner, Greener World** and how you believe women have a lot to do with our spending power and how we can make for a greener way?

**Diane:** Absolutely, you know I got excited about working with women on this issue when I realized that the opportunity to protect the environment really existed every time you went to the checkout counter. Women do spend .85 cents of every dollar in the marketplace, and we're buying everything. I like to say we're not just buying cheese doodles and diapers. We're buying electronics, and cars, and tools, and paint for our homes, and garden supplies; everything that has an environmental impact it seems, it really is something that we can affect because we're buying it rather than it being on the shelf. Manufacturers really fight legislation and regulation tooth and nail, but they embrace what happens in the marketplace. They have to, because profits are their lifeblood; it's the way they stay in business. So the way we spend our money is the most direct channel we have to tell manufacturers that we approve or disapprove of the way they're doing business. And when we favor products and services that offer the greatest environmental benefit, we're not only rewarding those producers that are already ahead of the pack, we are also saying to the ones that are sort of lagging behind, you know, get your gears engaged and do business if you want our money. Do green business if you want our money.

**Dotsie:** Right and you know one thing I think of right off the top is all of the water that we have purchased just in my family alone thru the years, in the single jugs of water, single bottles of water. And I just think, just this household alone, how much we have added to the trash because we haven't switched over and started using reusable water from the faucet, or even from the refrigerator that purifies it right in the refrigerator. And so that's one small step that our family is taking. It's just to say we can't do this bottled water anymore.

**Diane:** Yeah, well you know, to some degree I don't completely fault consumers because we didn't have any information, and we were told how much better bottled water was than tap water and that turned out not to be true. It turns out that tap water, in most cases, is healthier than bottled water because it is more tightly regulated. The *Environmental Protection Agency* monitors the status of tap water and it has much more stringent regulations than producers of bottled water do. So part of it was we did not get the entire picture when we were buying that water, and we didn't understand how much petroleum was being used to create those bottles, and then of course, the trash impact is really substantial. But it seems that so many people have gotten the message about bottled water and are using reusable bottles and reusable coffee mugs, and you know, for people who are worried about their water quality, it's much cheaper to put a filter on your tap at home and use a reusable bottle, than to keep buying bottled water. I mean bottled drinks of any kind. You know there's a lot of focus on bottled water, but people still buy a lot of soda in plastic bottles that aren't recycled either, so there's a lot we can do on the water front.

**Dotsie:** Right and you know I've read your book and I've reviewed it for our site and for a boomer magazine, and I have to say—I know this isn't our topic for the day but we're going to get to it—it's just incredible, the breakdown of all of the ways that women, or anyone spending money can make a difference. So I encourage anyone on the call to read your book. I loan it to a friend that's in my book club and she was tickled with it. Anyway, let's get talking about going green for Christmas which I think is such a great topic. What are some of the general "green principles" that consumers should keep in mind when we're thinking about reducing our environmental impact for the holidays?

**Diane:** Well right, especially right now. I think given the economic—sometimes it takes an economic downturn to help us put things into perspective, and I've always been a big fan of simplifying the holidays. I think now more than ever when budgets are tight, and people are looking for ways to have a simple and stress-free, and really enjoyable holiday. Question whether or not you have to give the elaborate gifts you may have given in the past; or a lot of gifts at all. You know, in our family, we're very big on giving experiences. You know I live in Washington, DC, and a new wing of the Smithsonian has opened up and my husband is getting a visit to the museum with the whole family, and a nice lunch out, and he's going to be totally delighted with that. It's going to be much more memorable than a new sweater or a new watch, or something like that. So simplify and look for ways that you can have a meaningful gift exchange that doesn't cost a lot of money and creates a long lasting memory.

**Dotsie:** I love that idea of giving experiences. That's a great way of putting it. That's neat. And I know people who do that, who will like go to a concert, or something at the theater instead of buying something, so that's a good thought.

**Diane:** Well you know you can do it on the inexpensive side like a little museum visit or you can do something more elaborate like theater tickets. You know theater tickets are quite expensive these days, but you know the environmental impact isn't particularly large given that you're not buying more stuff that maybe somebody doesn't need or will end up re-gifting to somebody else. So the re-gifting is certainly a good idea if you have something of value that you haven't used and you know somebody that would like it. I don't think there's anything wrong with re-gifting it to somebody who is going to get more use out of it than you are.

**Dotsie:** Yeah, you know in addition to re-gifting, I have a friend who doesn't only just give new things that have been given to her, but gives away personal items that mean a lot to her. And instead of waiting until she dies to give these gifts, she decides to give them, you know, while she's living and it's instead of buying something new and different. It's giving something very personal and meaningful to somebody else. I think that's another idea for the holidays.

**Diane:** Oh I completely agree. You know the other thing I like to give especially to cooks, are foods a little bit on the gourmet side that they just don't feel like they want to spend the money on themselves; that they'd really enjoy. Like a really delicious bottle of organic olive oil. Or you can make a basket up of olive oil and vinegar, and some spices, and maybe some salad tongs, and put it in a basket with four cloth napkins. You can do that whole nice gift for less than \$25.00 dollars, but it is so thoughtful. The olive oil and the vinegar; they're going to think of you every time they make a salad. They'll use the salad tongs forever. You can actually get really nice salad tongs that are made from renewable bamboo now. You can get reusable cloth napkins.

So it can be a very environmentally-appropriate gift, a very inexpensive gift, and you've put it together yourself. And I know for myself, I find it so much more peaceful to compile these nice little gifts than to be running around the mall. Running around the mall, you can't find a place to park, then you get there, everything is way too expensive anyway; you're fighting the crowds. You know for me, I can pick up the ingredients for a culinary basket just when I go grocery shopping. And I can use a basket I have at home; I don't have to buy a new basket. But I get so much pleasure out of thinking about the person as I am making it up, and then I give it to them, and they're so pleased that I made it. It's really a win-win situation all the way around.

**Dotsie:** Yeah, and you know, I have found that some of the discount stores like *Marshals*, and *TJ Max*, and *Ross Dress for Less*, have good, gourmet food sections at discount prices, so that's another thought that I'll just throw in there.

**Diane:** Absolutely. And *Trader Joe's* is the same way. Or you could even go to *Sam's Club*. Most people haven't tried something like shade-grown coffee yet. Shade-grown coffee is a great friend to the environment because it doesn't require the use of pesticides; it doesn't clear cut forest so that they grow the coffee in the sun, it protects habitats for migrating birds, so shade-grown coffee is a real nice gift to give to anybody, male or female, anybody who loves a cup of coffee and wants to try something new, and its pretty reasonably priced at a place like *Sam's Club*.

**Dotsie:** Okay, you know I've never heard of that. That's interesting. I'm going to look for it. I'm definitely going to look for it. Let's move on because we have a lot to cover. What kinds of other "green" gifts do you suggest people consider? Like if you are going to buy something, you know, you buy something that is reusable or some kind of food you mentioned. Any other green gifts that you could suggest?

**Diane:** Well I'm giving things like a really nice cloth tablecloth and cloth napkins. You know there are so many paper napkins that are thrown away every year and everybody can use cloth napkins. And you can use them till you feel that you cannot use them anymore, and then you can keep using them as a dust rag or



something. So cloth tablecloth and napkins is really nice. There's a nice flashlight; again, male or female, it's called BOGO, and that stands for buy one, give one, because when you buy it, a second flashlight is donated to a village in the developing world. Some place where people don't have access to a lot of electricity and the value of these is that they've got batteries that can be recharged by solar energy. So you can have, even keep it on the window sill and it will always be charged, and it's only something like \$23.95 or whatever; but when you buy one as a gift, you're giving a second gift at no cost to you, to somebody else who can really use the power that the flashlight provides.

**Dotsie:** Okay good idea. There is a woman in our forums who gives alternative gifts and actually, we've done some of that ourselves. Our church has an alternative gift market every year and it's everything from giving say, food to someone at the local shelter, all the way to buying animals for people across the world. And so, are you familiar with any Web sites or anything like that where you can do that alternative gift shopping?

**Diane:** Well you can go to [www.newdream.org](http://www.newdream.org). It's managed by the *Center for a New American Dream* and they've got lots of links and they've also got a lot of wonderful tips for simplifying the holidays and having a less commercial holiday. Heifer.org ([www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org)) is the Web site of *Heifer International* and you can find wonderful gifts to give in someone's name. We've given a flock of chickens in a village to some friends of ours who have in turn given us a water pump, you know, that they gave to a village. There is a site for people who are still trying to rebuild their homes in New Orleans after the hurricane down there and it's called [www.makeitrightnola.org](http://www.makeitrightnola.org). And it was actually started by Brad Pitt. Last Christmas I pooled all of my money for all of my friends, and I provided the lighting for a whole house.

**Dotsie:** What a great idea. I've haven't heard of that.

**Diane:** [www.makeitrightnola.org](http://www.makeitrightnola.org) and they're slowly rebuilding houses in the lower 9<sup>th</sup> ward which was the worst hit by the hurricane.

**Dotsie:** That will be a great gift for my sisters.

**Diane:** And you know, there are a couple of Web sites that you can go to where you can do your shopping on the site, but when you do, a percentage of the purchase is automatically donated to a charity that you choose. So if you go to [www.we-care.com](http://www.we-care.com) or [www.goodshop.com](http://www.goodshop.com), those are two Web sites—and I do link to these from my own Web site—but those are two Web sites that you can go to if you're going to do online shopping, you may as well do it at [www.we-care.com](http://www.we-care.com) or [www.goodshop.com](http://www.goodshop.com) because a percentage of the purchase price will go to your favorite charity.



And then if you wanted to focus specifically on the environment, you could go to a group called *Earth Share*. The Web site is [www.earthshare.org](http://www.earthshare.org). They will link you to over 500 local and national environmental organizations all of whom receive very high rankings from those groups that do charity analyses to determine, to make sure that your money is going where it should. And if you go to [www.earthshare.org](http://www.earthshare.org), you'll find, you could just either just give a gift to *Earth Share* in someone's name, or you could pick up one of their specific member organizations to support.

**Dotsie:** Gosh, what great Web sites. Thank you for sharing those. That's really wonderful. How about all of the wrapping that gets done this time of year. Do you suggest people wrapping their presents, or...what do you use?

**Diane:** I do wrap my presents, generally speaking, because I think its fun to give a gift that is a surprise. But I try not to use wrapping paper unless it's got recycle content in it, or I've saved it from last year. You know I'm a very careful wrapper. When I wrap, I use the least amount of tape I can, and you know, maybe just three pieces of tape for the whole thing. That's usually all you need to hold a package together. So I repurpose the wrapping paper from years past, but I also use all kinds of things. I get really nice, reusable grocery bags. You know you can get these really wonderful, colorful reusable shopping bags from almost any grocery store, or *Whole Foods*, or *Trader Joe's*. They're only .99 cents. If you're going to buy a box, or a roll of wrapping paper, it will often be several dollars. So you can get these reusable bags and just put the present in the bottom and then put a little tissue paper on top, and they're just great. And people can reuse them over and over. You can get what are called, "*Chico*" bags, and they fold up into a little ball that has a clip on it so you can clip it to your purse or briefcase, so that you don't forget to take it with you to the store, but they open up to a full-size shopping bag. And I'll open up the bag; I'll iron it so I get rid of the wrinkles, and then again, I put the present in the bag with a nice bow tying the handles together, and that becomes somebody's present they use all year round.

**Dotsie:** That's a great idea because I have to tell you, I just spent, and I can't believe it, \$3.99 each, for two bags for these gifts that my husband is giving to the women that work for him because they are so big and awkward, I didn't know what to do with them. And you know, I could have bought those reusable bags. It's such a great idea because some of the stores have really pretty ones.

**Diane:** Oh they do. They're really, really beautiful, and again, people are looking for things that they can reuse, and if they decide they're not going to use it, they can use it next year to give to somebody else. We're constantly circulating bags in my household. And my neighbor—I have a neighbor who buys beautiful Christmas fabric and then sews gift bags. In her family now, they have so many of these cloth gift bags, they never buy paper because they're just using these gift bags, but you know, as neighbors exchange gifts, I've gotten my hands on a couple of these, and I've reused them over and over; they just don't wear out.

**Dotsie:** That's a good thing for all of these great ideas. What about having holiday parties? I know we just had Thanksgiving at our house, and there were twenty-six of us, and I wanted to use dishes because—I just want to. I don't want to use all of these paper products, and I didn't have twenty-four dishes. And then we were having gumbo and I didn't have all the bowls. So I went to the dollar store and bought extra plates and cups and I figured this way I'll have some forever. And in addition to that, it was probably cheaper to buy the plates and cups at the dollar store, than to buy paper products some where else. So do you have any other ideas like that we can use to "green" our holiday parties?

**Diane:** You know...I have done the same thing over the years, and what I certainly found, it can saved me a lot of money because you can spend \$25.00 dollars on all of those paper products that you just end up throwing away, or you could invest that in these reusable utensils and plates and glasses that you'll use over time. What a bunch of my neighbors and I have done is that one of us have bought enough napkins, cloth napkins for parties; one of us has bought enough cups, one of us has enough plates, one of us has enough silverware. We never all have a party on the same night; and it all matches. So whenever anybody is having a party, we just call the other three people and say can we borrow the cups, can we borrow the plates, can we borrow the silverware, and then we have plenty of it. It creates this really nice shared sense of responsibility, and it is also saving all of us a lot of money.

**Dotsie:** Yeah, I would love to live in your neighborhood. Sounds like a great place.

**Diane:** Well it is.

**Dotsie:** Sounds like it. Okay, any other suggestions for green holiday parties?

**Diane:** Well you know I always focus on getting decorations from my yard. I'm not a big one to go out and spend a lot of money on decorations and stuff, but if you go to, you know, take a pair of clippers out to the yard. Holly...all the berries are on the holly trees now. You know I've got a vase just full of dried seedheads from the Rudbeckia and all of these other plants where the petals have dropped off, and now we've got these big, beautiful, rich-colored seedheads that when you put them together with the holly berry, look totally beautiful. So before you spend a lot of money on decorating, especially again, if they're throw-away decorations, spend fifteen minutes out in the yard enjoying this season and then clipping things that you can bring in and really brighten up your space.

**Dotsie:** Yeah that's great for decorating. What about holiday lighting that might be low energy?

**Diane:** Well the new trick in holiday lighting is to use the LED lights; you know, these are the Light-Emitting Diode sets that use 90% less energy than the typical holiday lights. And now they've got them in icicles, they've got them in twinklers, they've got them in bulbs. Although I have to say that the light is not that warm, yellow light that you are use to with the other lights, but they do the job of lighting up a bush, or a tree, very, very nicely and they are more expensive, but the thing that I like about them is that they're very durable. Now I don't know about you, but I find that when I get out my lighting strings every season, I'm always throwing away a few because they've burned out, or they've broken, or whatever and these are very, very durable. So using LED's is one option.

Using candles that are soy-based where they are made from bees wax. They're beautiful. I especially love the beeswax candles. You can get them in tapers, you can get them in votives, you can get them in the big stocky candles that you want to put in a centerpiece. They cast a beautiful light, they won't leave a lot of that smoky residue the way a paraffin-based candle does. And if you're at all chemically sensitive, you know, if you don't like the smell of a lot of these candles, the beeswax candles are really a great option.

**Dotsie:** Okay now where can we get these lights and candles? Are they at places that you typically shop, or do you have to go some place in particular?

**Diane:** You know I just bought my LED lights at my local hardware store. It wasn't even a chain. It was just my local hardware store. Although I'm positive you could get them at Home Depot, or possibly at Wal-mart, probably. On my Web site, if you go to [www.biggreenpurse.com](http://www.biggreenpurse.com) and go down to the "green shopping" section, you'll see "holidays" and there's also some links there where you can order them online. *Ace Hardware* is another place where you can order them online.

**Dotsie:** Okay, so that's [www.biggreenpurse.com](http://www.biggreenpurse.com), and Diane has a tremendous amount of information if you're interested in going in any area of your life. Feel free to visit her site and it's free. You don't have to pay for a newsletter or for any of the information. She's also of course, the association for "Going Green" at the National Association of Baby Boomer Women ([www.nabbw.com](http://www.nabbw.com)) and we're starting to get quite a nice archive of her articles on our site, too. So make sure if you're interested in the topic, you can absolutely learn more by going to either of those sites.

Now this is a topic that I love because I shop at our local farmer's market; however, it's finished now. It ends like the weekend before Thanksgiving because it gets so cold, and there really isn't a whole lot for the farmers to sell locally this time of year. So are there any organic or local foods that would add a green touch to the holiday buffet table?

**Diane:** Well you know you can still buy locally-grown apples and pears, and squashes, and pumpkins, and lettuces because they are cold weather crops. You can get jams and jellies and honeys from the farmer's markets and local artisans. The same with breads and cheeses. You'll often find that there are still sort of an emporia around a community that make it possible to get in touch with local growers. And if you want to find locally grown food, I'm guessing, I'll look up, there's a Web site that you can go to and find the closest place to you to buy local food. It's called Food Roots, [www.foodroots.org](http://www.foodroots.org) and it will help you find locally grown foods.

**Dotsie:** Very good. Now let's talk about the cost because we had a question sent in about this teleseminar, asked if we would address this. The cost of organic food is definitely more expensive. Do you know of any way to get around this expense? I know *Trader Joe's* is a wonderful place to shop and I know that a lot of people think it is a specialty food store; therefore, it is more expensive. But that is not true. Their foods is less expensive than those natural organic foods in another store. So I think *Trader Joe's* is a good option. Do you have any other options?

**Diane:** You know I would say be smart about what you're buying. You know we were talking about the bottled water before. People would say to me, I just can't afford that organic milk; it's so expensive. But they were spending fifteen to twenty dollars a week on bottled water. So first I encourage people to look at how they're spending their whole budget. Not just, say, on organic apples, but if you are buying, bottled water, for example, can you shift that fifteen to twenty dollars a week to organic produce and that sort of covers you. It turns out that certainly, buying in season keeps things a little more reasonably priced. Organic Kiwi fruits coming in from New Zealand are going to be a little bit more expensive. They're traveling all that way, out of season, to get to our cold weather markets. So it helps if you buy seasonally. When you buy seasonally, food is going to be cheaper than when you have to buy imported food that is grown far away in order to accommodate this palate that we've developed that we want any food all the time.

**Dotsie:** Isn't that the truth?

**Diane:** Also sometimes if you buy frozen organic food, it's cheaper than conventionally-treated, fresh food, and if you're going to put it in the freezer anyway, you can go ahead and buy it frozen.

**Dotsie:** That's a great point. Really good.

**Diane:** And then the other thing is that the *US Department of Agriculture* did a survey on home much food people actually throw away and it's about 30% of what they buy. Imagine if you were smarter about what you were buying and

actually eating what you bought, that would basically give you an additional 30% to spend on these things that you think are a little bit more expensive.

**Dotsie**: That's a great point because I know once my kids moved out, I was still buying big, and now I don't any more because I was getting rid of too much of it. And now I shop more often, buy more fresh food, and just buy less of it because we don't eat it.

**Diane**: Well you know, you have a good intention, and you think you are, but you get busy, you forget what's in the very back of the refrigerator. I mean I feel like it's the grand canyon back there, you know? I'll be rooting around to see what I forgot about. That can just be a real challenge. So it might make sense to buy less at any one time that you shop, and use in fact what you buy, and then you end up being much smarter about how you spend your money, and how you use it, then like I say, you've got a little bit extra for that organic milk, or some of the organic produce, or organic poultry and beef, if that is what you're interested in.

**Dotsie**: That's great. Okay now moving into the holiday season, how about any organic wines or beers, or other beverages that you can serve during the holidays. Do they exist?

**Diane**: There is a growing selection of organic wines and beer, and even spirits, vodka, for example, available. You can order it online and honestly, the easiest thing to do is just do an Internet search for organic wine, but you can also go to the local liquor store. Now there is such a demand for all things organic, that I suspect you would find organic wines on the shelf. Organic beer is going to be a little bit more difficult to come by, but *Frey's Vineyards* has been offering sustainably-grown wines for quite a while, and they're probably the place to start.

**Dotsie**: And that's online?

**Diane**: Right.

**Dotsie**: So just Google *Frey Vineyards*?

**Diane**: Right.

**Dotsie**: Okay, good place to start. Now what about decorating tips. You mentioned going out to the yard. Other than that. Anything else?

**Diane**: You know I use my Christmas cards. I get Christmas cards every year and they go up on the outside of the closet door, or I can cut them into snowflakes. I save the ones from the previous year. So the new ones come in and they go up on the doors. And I use the old ones for all kinds of things. I cut the signature off and the greeting part off so I just have the beautiful card. I can

use those as gift tags. You just get a hole puncher and punch a little hole and put a ribbon through it and it becomes a beautiful, free gift tag. Depending on what the pattern is, you can cut them into snowflake patterns and use them on the windows. You can use them as place cards if you're having people over for a sit-down dinner. So that's something that is very easy. I have things that I have just used over and over and over again. You know; blankets and throw wraps, and pillowcases; things that just come out for the holiday season and then go back in. Garlands of ribbon that I put up my stairs and holiday lights that I've used for 10 and 15 years, even. You know it's like ornaments. Once you get them, you really love them and don't want to get rid of them, you add to them. Over the years, they take on this special meaning. So I think you can do the same thing with your holiday decorations.

**Dotsie:** Yeah and that is one thing that is good about holiday decorations because I think most people do use them over and over, year after year, and enjoy like the sentimental value of the ornaments, and the garland, and all of the decorations that go around the house; who gave you this, and what you were going through when they gave it to you, etc, like that. So that is one of the benefits of holiday decorating is that a lot of it is really reused year after year.

**Diane:** Right and you know, why not? I've noticed with my family, it means that the holidays are coming. We have this collection of snowmen that have been made by crafts people around our region and when we put that collection up, that means to them that the holidays are here. It's like when you only bake the Christmas cookies. You don't bake the Christmas cookies for Easter, you bake them at Christmas, and that means to the family, that the holiday is here and you get into the tradition and the spirit of the event.

**Dotsie:** Now what about Christmas trees? Do you recommend artificial, or are there organic ones, or what do you recommend as far as the trees?

**Diane:** You know I do recommend that you do get a live tree as opposed to artificial tree. And there have been so many analyses of this and really part of the problem is the manufacturing of the tree made from plastic or aluminum is just that it is very resource intensive. There are now some companies that are creating standards for Christmas tree growers to aspire to so that they use fewer pesticides, and that they manage their property with more of mother nature in mind. And there is a company called "Green Promise" that's [www.greenpromise.com](http://www.greenpromise.com) that will link you to—will give you information about organic Christmas trees, and it will also help you find them. But even if you don't buy an organically-grown Christmas tree, just buying a tree that's grown nearer to your home. You know it turns out that the states that grow the most Christmas trees are Oregon, and North Carolina. So for me I live in Maryland. Either one of those is going to be a long distance to haul a tree that I'm only going to have in my house for two weeks, and then I'm going to throw away. So I've found a supplier who lives right in Maryland who actually does grow his trees organically,

and I drive one block to his house, he brings the tree in from his farm, and there you have it. It's really a wonderful experience. And again, it also supports the local economy, I get a really fresh and healthy tree, I support organic and local agriculture, so it's really a win-win.

**Dotsie**: Yeah and I would think the tree farms where you go out and just chop down your own tree, would be a good way. And then my father-in-law always bought a tree with the bulb on the bottom so that after the holidays, he planted it on his property.

**Diane**: You know, I did that about twenty years ago, and my former Christmas tree is about 30 feet tall. It's beautiful, and you know, the only thing that I would say about that is dig the hole in the ground while the ground is soft enough to dig before it totally freezes over, and then, you usually can only keep the totally live tree, the bulb tree, alive in the house about a week, so you might bring it in about December 20, and then you would take it out say the 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, because they do start to lose their needles pretty rapidly.

**Dotsie**: What about like getting rid of the Christmas tree? We have a local collection of Christmas trees. Is that what we should do? Or do you have a better suggestion?

**Diane**: You know, you don't want to throw it in the trash if you can avoid it. I mean it represents fifteen or twenty years of growing, and all of the resources that went into that. Our community also picks up Christmas trees and then mulches them, so what we had standing in our living room in the winter, we put on our gardens in the spring, which is really nice. You can prune the tree yourself and use the needles to make sachets. You know you can make little cotton bags with drawstrings on them, and put some of the pine needles in the bags. Then you have beautifully scented sachets to put in your drawers, or to give as gifts next year. You can prune the branches off and then use the branches as mulch around bushes and perennial beds, and so on. If you have a fireplace, you can prune the branches away and save just the hard, the trunk of the tree, and when it dries out, you can burn it in the fireplace. So you can use it for all kinds of things.

**Dotsie**: Gosh I never would have thought of that, but what a great idea. Very good.

**Diane**: And again, it's one of those things where you've got all of those beautiful needles and you make it for somebody. Making gifts for people of things that they may have experience. If they've been to your house and they saw your tree and then they get the sachet with the pine needles, that's really a nice thoughtful gift.

**Dotsie**: Alright Diane, I don't think I have any other questions. You've given us a lot of resources and of course, your book. While it's not necessarily for going



green for the holidays, it's an excellent resource for anyone, but especially women who have their purchasing power. Do you have anything else that you would like to share with us as far as a book, or any other online resource that you haven't mentioned yet?

**Diane:** Well, you know; two things. One is we do send out a free newsletter every two weeks. It's very short, just a couple of very useful tips, usually with some money-saving information attached to them. So I would encourage listeners to go to [www.biggreenpurse.com](http://www.biggreenpurse.com) and you can sign up right on the Web site and start enjoying our newsletter. Also, we are encouraging a million women to think about consciously shifting their household budgets to products and services that offer the greatest environmental benefit. Thousands of women have already signed up and again, it's called the **One in a Million** campaign, it's right on the homepage of [www.biggreenpurse.com](http://www.biggreenpurse.com), and it's very handy because it gives you a list of suggestions to help you get started. A lot of people think I'd really love to shift my spending, or I'd really love to start buying more green products, but I'm just not sure where to start, and this list offers you some ideas. And we're not asking people to spend more money. We're saying look at your budget. It's like the idea of the bottled water. Are you spending money on bottled water that you could shift to organic milk?

One of our favorite shifts is from paper towels to a sponge. It turns out that one sponge last as long as about 17 rolls of paper towels. So if you make that shift, you are going to save about \$30.00 dollars on paper towels that you'd just be throwing away. So we encourage people to shift their spending and to join us in the **One in a Million** campaign.

**Dotsie:** Now is that your campaign or have you networked with someone else to do that?

**Diane:** We're running it out of [www.biggreenpurse.com](http://www.biggreenpurse.com). So we're happy to network with everybody.

**Dotsie:** What a wonderful idea. Okay, so the sponge to paper towel; that type of information is on your site?

**Diane:** Right.

**Dotsie:** And so people need to sign up for that, and then what happens once you sign up? Are you sent reminders, or are you on your newsletter list, what happens as a result?

**Diane:** Right, right. You get on the newsletter list, and also you can download a, sort of a tally sheet. We're asking people to let us know when they've shifted a \$1,000. And again, we're not asking people to spend \$1,000 more, but you know, if you shift to that sponge, you've spent a dollar on that sponge; well, you've

actually shifted \$30.00 dollars in spending right, because you're saving all of that money. So you fill out your sheet and when you do, send it to us, and we'll feature you on our Web site.

**Dotsie**: Oh that's really neat. So what are some of the other ideas that people are shifting from and to?

**Diane**: Well you know a lot of people are shifting to mass transients. I just heard a report on the radio that mass transient ridership is way, way up, and of course, it's been because of gas prices and the cost of maintaining a car. But you can save at least twenty to fifty dollars a month on gasoline and again, that's money you might shift from gasoline into mass transient. Tickets, bus tickets for example, into a bicycle, into a pair of walking shoes, so say you're walking distances of a mile or less, so that's the idea. When you can save money one place you can shift your spending to something else that helps you continue to save money, and also offers a greater environmental benefit.

**Dotsie**: Okay, one last thing and then I'll see if anybody has any questions. I'm curious about children's gifts. We're hearing so much about lead in these things. But in addition to that, I'm just curious to know if you recommend anything in particular for gifts for children this season.

**Diane**: Well that's such a huge category isn't it because of all of the ages, and all of the things they're interested in. What I gave my grand-nieces and nephews was reusable water bottles. They're really cute from a company called Klean Kanteen (<http://www.kleankanteen.com>) or Sigg, and they actually make reusable water bottles that are sippy cups. If you've got a really little kid, you've got the sippy cup option which is very handy. I gave them sandwich boxes. So there are reusable sandwich boxes and inside, they have a cut out. So for example my nephew, he got a cutout in the shape of a train. So it's just really cute. He can press out his sandwich in the shape of a train and then take it to school in this reusable lunch box.

**Dotsie**: Right. That's cute. How about for teens? Anything in particular for teens?

**Diane**: You know for teenagers, generally I think that less is more. I mean, you know I said to my daughter the other day; do you remember what you got for Christmas last year? And she remembered one thing and it was because she picked it out herself. I think photos, family keepsakes perhaps. Maybe it's a time to pass down a family keepsake that will be meaningful to someone. I know one Christmas we gave my son his grandfather's watch. You know, very meaningful to him. Much more meaningful I think than anything we've given him in his entire life, actually.

**Dotsie**: Yeah, and what I think is really neat about the younger generation is they are so tuned in to going green. Much more so than our generation was when we were teens, I believe. And I think it's because they are learning it at school and their friends are doing it, and they're just interested in it. So it's great to raise green children, and now, green grandchildren. Unless you have anything else to add, I'll see if anyone has a question. Anyone have a question?

**Caller 1**: Hello. I've really enjoyed the call. This is Pat Burns. Hi Dotsie.

**Dotsie**: Hello Pat.

**Caller 1**: Great question, by the way. So what I would like to know—I'm very interested in the green movement myself, as well. But I find that a lot of people, and I've surveyed some of my readers, I have a book called Grandparents Rock, and I've surveyed about this green initiative, and they kind of feel overwhelmed. Do you have on your Web site, or available, like real simple these four or five things, and make it real easy to be more environmentally green and conscious?

**Diane**: Well on my Web site, there is a tab across the top of the page that says, "Green Living." And there are a bunch of categories there that I think have pretty concise information in them. So that's where I would start. Just look at one of those categories. There's a category on electronics, there's a category on food, on clothing, on gardening. I would just have somebody just pick one of those categories and not worry about everything else. Just say yeah, I'd like to eat healthier, I'd like to support organic agriculture, so that's where I'm going to start. Or I've heard a lot about those compact fluorescent light bulbs, I'm going to check them out. So have them take a look at those categories and see if that works for them.

**Caller 1**: Love it; great idea. Thank you so much.

**Dotsie**: Yeah and I would say also that your idea of just switching from paper towels to a sponge; I mean, something simple like that. Or instead of buying all of the little soda bottles, buy the big two-liter soda bottle. I just remember my mom even talking about all of the small packaging, all these individual-size serving things are just horrendous that we need to go back to buying. And it's so simple, but we have just gotten into some bad habits that we need to break. Even like the juice boxes for little kids; I remember doing them for my kids and I could kick myself now. So I bet that would also be a good area. That section that you have about ***One in a Million***, there would be some good little tips in there, too, right?

**Diane**: Oh yes, absolutely.

**Dotsie**: Okay, does anybody else have a question? Okay, if not, I just want to say thanks so much for all of these great ideas. We will be promoting this

teleseminar because we record it, and then it is also transcribed so women can come to the site and listen to the teleseminar, and then they can also download it. Because it's such a hot topic and because there was such great information offered, we're going to make the audio link available in the Important Announcements of our sites so that people who aren't just members of the association, can click on that and listen while they are online and learn some great ways to go green for the holidays. So Diane, I just want to thank you so much for your expertise. You've really given us a lot to think about, and a lot of great ideas and suggestions for this holiday season.

**Diane:** My pleasure. Happy Holidays!

**Dotsie:** Same to you and we'll be in touch. Have a great day. Thank you.