

Going Green at the Office

**By: Kori L. McOmber
Schultz & Pogue, LLP**

Like many people, I was an active recycler of aluminum cans – mostly of the Diet Coke variety – until about a year ago. At that time, I started hearing more and more about other items that could also be recycled. I decided to do some research and find out what else could be recycled at home.

A friend directed me to the Keep Indianapolis Beautiful (“KIB”) website (www.kibi.org) where I learned about a multitude of items that could be recycled at free KIB drop-off sites located throughout the city. I was surprised by how many items I used regularly in my home that could be recycled – magazines, junk mail flyers, contact solution bottles, aerosol cans, pizza boxes, fresh fruit containers, soup cans, etc. The list goes on and on.

After investing in a few more recycling bins, I started to reflect on my recycling efforts at my home-away-from-home – the office. I realized that somewhere during my 25-minute commute to my office, my new-found recycling frenzy disappeared. I threw paper in the trash, used plastic silverware to eat my lunch, and, I’m ashamed to admit, occasionally enjoyed a cup of coffee out of a Styrofoam cup (GASP!).

I started to think about how I could incorporate what I was doing at home in my personal life into my professional life. From these thoughts, the “Go Green” Project of the Indianapolis Bar Association was born. If I was so diligent in my recycling efforts at home, couldn’t that be transferred to the office, too? And, couldn’t others be encouraged to act in the same manner? We all know lawyers are notorious for killing trees with their massive paper files, but could we change that? Could we make a difference in our environment and our future?

The “Go Green” Project is still in its infant stages. Generally, the program is designed to encourage recycling by all legal professionals by increasing environmental awareness and encouraging environmental change in our professional lives. Earlier this year, a survey was distributed specifically to central Indiana law firm Human Resource directors regarding their recycling programs. I was happy to see the number of firms who already have a firm-wide recycling program in place. While recycling efforts are improving, more can still be done to encourage greater participation by all legal professionals. Another survey was recently distributed to all Indianapolis legal professionals to study what type of recycling programs are actively being used in the professional setting. The “Go Green” Project hopes to cater to the needs of the legal professional by providing the services needed to adopt a more environmentally-friendly lifestyle at the office.

I encourage all legal professionals to think of ways they can reduce, reuse and recycle in their professional lives. What resources are available in your firm, and what could you do to make a positive impact on the environment in your professional life? Must you really print the entire 45 page case from Westlaw when you’re only citing it for what’s on page 4? Do you need to reprint the entire brief when you only changed one word on page 6? Can you use a washable mug brought in from home rather than a disposable cup for your morning coffee? I now think twice before printing any document, recycle any paper that is used, use reusable dishware and silverware at lunch, and have sworn off Styrofoam completely. The “Go Green” Project hopes that others will do the same. Now, give this newsletter to a friend before tossing it in the recycling bin.