

The CHIEF

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Local News

Reducing our plastic intake

Greener Footprints appeals to businesses at Chamber luncheon

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Special to The Chief

posted: April 24, 2009 In conjunction with week-long Earth Day celebrations, the Chamber of Commerce hosted Greener Footprints co-founder Tracey Saxby for a presentation on reducing plastic bag usage during a luncheon at the Squamish Valley Golf Course Tuesday (April 21). “Communities like Squamish might be small but it’s all cumulative, small changes add up and the impact is huge,” said Saxby told the roomful of business owners and representatives. Greener Footprints is working with communities across Canada to get businesses and locals to buy into the concept of using only reusable tote bags instead of plastic. To help encourage the transition in Squamish, Saxby’s organization has been working with the District of Squamish and local business owners to come up with incentives to make the bags more attractive. “It’s easy to start making a difference right away, just start refusing to use plastic bags and make a pledge to change your ways,” she said. Saxby started the initiative in 2005, and in 2007 proposed that the town of Rossland try to garner enough local support to make the community the first in Canada to become completely plastic bag free. The support from locals and businesses was enormous, and within the first year they had achieved a 75 per cent reduction. The national statistics on plastic bag usage show the scale of the issue the organization is trying to combat. Canadians use between nine and 15 billion plastic bags every year. Plastic bags are blamed for blocking drainage systems and causing flooding, they are ingested by birds, wildlife and livestock, and end up in landfills where they can take up to 1,000 years to break down. All of this for an item that gets used on average less than five minutes. Saxby said she sees many similarities between Rossland and Squamish, and hopes the initiative will catch on here as well. “Both communities are small with strong environmental awareness and interest in outdoor activities, and many of the businesses are locally owned so it’s easier to educate and involve the community.” Involvement is exactly what Saxby has in mind for Squamish. Thanks to the support from sponsors like Squamish Savings and the district, free reusable tote bags will be distributed to every home in Squamish starting in June. The bags will contain educational materials about the issue and will be adorned with a local design and logos from other supporting sponsors. More information can be found at www.greenerfootprints.com

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