

Carrying your own reusable water bottle: still plastic?

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
23 December 2008

Culture Change Letter #222 -

There are two healthy trends going together: rejecting plastic water bottles, and appreciating good ol' tap water. Reasons include the need to cut waste: at best, 17% of plastic water bottles are recycled. Only about one percent of plastic bags are recycled. Of these and other plastics, over 99.9% of it is petroleum. Landfills and incinerators handle the great bulk of this non-biodegradable toxic trash, and a huge amount resides in the oceans. Regarding the major issue of appreciating water as a right or public utility, paying for water to enrich corporations is anathema to more and more of us.

So the trend toward reusable water bottles is heartening, even if it's not as good as being able to rely on your nearby pristine stream or the water fountains that every town should proudly offer. Firms such as Kleen Kanteen and Sigg are making fancy metal water bottles that are free of plastic except for the lids. As for reusable plastic water bottles, they still dominate, but increasingly with the fortunate removal of bisphenol-A (endocrine disruptor being banned in Canada) from the polycarbonate plastic.

Besides Take Back the Tap, a campaign of the Food and Water Watch group, there's a positive business called Tappening. I didn't get it at first, but it's about the tap happening! The firm sent a press release to Culture Change on Dec. 23, offering their economic analysis as a helping hand to today's Depression budgets. I wanted to just run the release as is, but I was shocked by two elements that require objection:

First, Tappening boasted that its initial run of 39,000 plastic bottles were snapped up. I was horrified about the plastic. Second, a claim is made in the release (see bottom) that petrochemical pharmaceutical drug traces are safe in tap water. This flies in the face of many scientific studies showing bisphenol-A to be potent at the minimum of minimum exposure: 0.1 parts per billion, causing cancer, diabetes, obesity and birth defects.

What we think we know about "safe" plastics today might be just a repeat of our ignorance in the past about bisphenol-A.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Fern Marcy Edison

Ericho
Communications; 845-679-6319

RESOLVE TO SAVE \$1400 (or more!) IN 2009 BY GIVING UP BOTTLED WATER!

Folks from The 'Tappening' Campaign to Promote Tap Water Tell How...

(December 23, 2008; New York, NY) The 'Tappening' campaign has been instrumental in helping forge a national movement that encourages people to make tap their water of choice, whenever possible. The campaign (which Adweek has called "a form of business philanthropy...founded to right a perceived wrong") and its website--www.tappening.com--both launched in November, '07, have served to educate the public about the extreme and unnecessary waste of resources and pollution of the Earth caused by the bottled water industry.

Now—with the economics of bottled water becoming a more compelling reason than ever to stop buying and drinking it--Tappening has crunched the numbers and would like to share them with the public:

For an individual who regularly drinks bottled water:

- 8 glasses of water per day is the recommended intake (10 ounces per serving)
- a 20 ounce bottle of water on average is \$1.50.
- Four (4) 20 ounce bottles per day = 8 glasses = \$6 a day.
- \$6 per day X 365 days = \$2190.

--Making allowances for days when an individual may not drink the full recommended amount, for possible discounted prices when buying bottled water in bulk, and for the cost of an optional home water filter system (i.e.-Brita or PUR), the folks at Tappening conclude that the average annual estimated savings for an individual who switches from regular bottled water intake to tap water would be approximately \$1400!

For a family of four that regularly drinks bottled water:

Using the figures and allowances above, the average estimated savings would be \$5600 per year!!

More about Tappening and Tappening bottles:

In an effort to self-finance the campaign, the Tappening co-founders—PR honcho Eric Yaverbaum and advertising CEO Mark DiMassimo--introduced their own line of well-designed, reusable water bottles. To their surprise, the Tappening bottles became trendy practically overnight. Their entire initial inventory of 39,000 plastic bottles sold out in 36 hours after launch of the website! To date, over 350,000 Tappening bottles have been sold.

The 100% BPA-free plastic bottles are available in green or in blue. The Green bottle says “Think Global, Drink Local”; the Blue bottle says “What’s Tappening?” (\$14.95 plus \$3 s&h).

The stainless steel bottles are available in Silver, Blue, Gold and Red (\$18.95 plus \$3 s&h).

ABCs ‘Good Morning America’ cited the Tappening bottle as being “one of the hottest products for 2008,” calling it a “hip new reusable water bottle.”

Trend Central’s Jane Buckingham said “The water bottle gives customers a simple way to do good, as well as a conduit to broadcast their beliefs.”

The campaign and bottles have been touted by media and bloggers across the country, from People magazine to Forbes to Scientific American.

The bottles are available for purchase at www.tappening.com .

All of the money raised via the sales of the bottles has gone directly back into the educational website and campaign.

***high res images of Tappening bottles and bag available upon request.

Additional note about the safety of tap water:

The American Council of Science and Health (ACSH) just posted today their "Top 10 Unfounded Health Scares of 2008." One of these unfounded scares is: "Pharmaceuticals can be found in our drinking water." ACSH's bottom-line conclusion is: "No negative health effects have ever been observed as the result of trace levels of pharmaceuticals in drinking water supplies. New technology allows us to find minute levels of scary-sounding chemicals in many substances we come in contact with every day, but such small amounts do not pose a health risk. Remember, the dose makes the poison!"

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The Plastic Plague pages on Culture Change, including
"Don't Drink the (Plastic Bottled) Water":

culturechange.org

Tappening's website:

tappening.com

Food and Water Watch:

foodandwaterwatch.org

"Water Fight: corporate bottom line versus foes of privatization and plasticization" Dec. 5, 2008:

culturechange.org

Algalita Marine Research Foundation - maker of documentary "Our Synthetic Sea":

algalita.org