Greening the 85th Birthday Celebrations of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba
(A proposal by the Going Green House of the Way Forward Initiative)

What is the Going Green House?
It is a team of individuals who share a passion for the environment and are Divinely inspired to translate this collective energy into 'greener' practices throughout the nation, starting from an individual and grass-roots level. The team is comprised of both, individuals who have careers in environment related fields as well as those who simply feel passionate about the environment and its sustainability irrespective of their professional background.

What is the Way Forward Initiative?
The Going Green House is one of few Houses that were formed as part of the Way Forward Initiative that came into being after the National Youth Conference (“NYC”), held in May 2009. The Way Forward Initiative serves to sustain the energy and momentum of the NYC by providing a platform for like minded Youth that share a common interest (each area of interest is called a “House”) to connect, collaborate, share ideas and resources via a virtual forum across all Regions.

What type of projects has the Going Green House been working on? What is the Going Green House’s objective?
Over the past year, the go-green team has initiated projects listed below. Please refer to the attached Introductory Document as well.

1. Electronic waste collection
2. Increasing awareness of environment along with Sai ideals (ceiling on desires program) by conducting study circles and making presentations at retreats
3. 85 Green Living Tips which are simple yet effective steps to a sustainable living (to be finalized in the upcoming days)
4. Make events leading up to Swami’s 85th birthday completely green and continue this practice for all future Sai events
5. Prepare SSE lesson plans on going green in collaboration with local SSE teachers

This team has been successful in making the following events green:
- Region 4 regional retreat – Houston, Sept. 2010
- SSE teacher training workshop - Ann Arbor, Sept. 2010
- Family sports day - Fort Lauderdale, Sept. 2010
- Eshwaramma day celebrations – Cleveland, May 2010
- Weekly satsang and bhajans – Raleigh, Jun. 2010
- Rudram luncheon – Atlanta, Jan. 2010
- Tread Softly, regional YA retreat – Austin, Jan. 2010

From birth to death, from dawn till night, man pursues fleeting pleasures by the exploitation, the despoiling, the desecration of Nature, ignoring the truth that it is the property of God the Creator, and any injury caused to it is a sacrilege, which merits dire punishment – Baba (SSS, vol. 18)
Some of these events were 100% green, while the others have exhausted all feasible options to make it 70-90% green. At most of these events, food and beverage was served in ceramic, steel, or biodegradable containers rather than using their plastic, paper, and Styrofoam counterparts; and the leftover food was sent for composting. In some events separate recycling bins were placed for paper, glass, and plastic because they could not use ceramic, steel, or biodegradable based products. This was possible because of a few passionate folks and the love and support from the Sai family.

The world is losing its ecological balance as man out of utter selfishness, is robbing mother Earth of her resources like coal, petroleum, iron, etc. As a result, we are seeing natural calamities. Human life will find fulfillment only when ecological balance is maintained. – Quotes of Baba in Tread Softly by Tina K. Schweickert

**SWAMI’S 85TH BIRTHDAY GO-GREEN INITIATIVE**

With Swami’s grace, the Go-Green team has been inspired to make His 85th Birthday Celebrations completely green across the nation. This will not be possible without your help and cooperation. So far, the team has successfully “greenified” several events and is inspired to expand this effort to all Sai Centers by Swami’s 85th Birthday. Below are some suggestions and ways in which you can Go Green this November!

1. **Minimize dependence on plastic, paper and Styrofoam products when serving food.** Plastic and Styrofoam products take at least 10 generations to disintegrate and hence increase the solid waste quantity. Statistics show that an estimated 30 billion plastic bottles are consumed every year approximately 1369 tons of Styrofoam goes into U.S. landfills and burning of these landfills is releasing dangerous chemical byproducts into the atmosphere. These dangerous gases contribute to global warming which is resulting in melting of snowcapped mountains and extinction of many species. Table 1 shows the environmental impact of various materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manufacturing 1 lb of Material</th>
<th>Energy Used (kWh)</th>
<th>Water Used (gals)</th>
<th>Solid Waste (lbs)</th>
<th>CO₂ Emissions (lbs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biodegradable (Sugarcane based)</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>14.41</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% Recycled Paperboard</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plastic (Polyethylene)</td>
<td>10.28</td>
<td>7.45</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Styrofoam</td>
<td>11.28</td>
<td>20.54</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The target should be to generate zero waste, which may seem too idealistic. Depending on the number of members in your center, time and money constraints you can consider the following options to achieve zero waste or minimize the use of plastic, paper and Styrofoam products.

- Serve food and beverages in hard plastic/ceramic/steel plates and glasses, just like in the canteens at Puttaparthi. A team of devotees can be dedicated to wash these items and reuse them for
future use. Remember to turn off the faucet in between washes! In this case you can achieve zero waste.

- Serve food in containers made from biodegradable products such as sugarcane which can be disposed like their plastic and Styrofoam counterparts without any harmful impact on the environment. Below is a cost comparison of plastic and Styrofoam with biodegradable products. If this is does not seem cost effective then please consider the next option!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Plastic/Styrofoam</th>
<th>Biodegradable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unit Price*</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold Cups</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>$0.03</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot Cups</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>$0.03</td>
<td>$30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plates (9” -11”)</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>$0.08</td>
<td>$81.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Compartment Plates</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>$0.06</td>
<td>$19.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forks</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>$0.03</td>
<td>$26.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoons</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>$0.03</td>
<td>$26.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowls</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>$0.02</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cost</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$234.01</strong></td>
<td><strong>$368.25</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Prices from [http://www.worldcentric.org/biocompostables](http://www.worldcentric.org/biocompostables) and [http://www.costco.com](http://www.costco.com)

- Carry a Sai Green Kit to any event, consisting of a ceramic plate, silverware, steel or BPA free water bottle, ceramic coffee mug, and a cloth napkin. The Go-Green team has found this to be the best and most effective alternative based on the response received from groups it has helped go green. Here zero waste can be achieved if everyone gets their Sai Green Kit.

- Consider using goodie bags made of 100% recycled paper.

- Consider the following options when distributing vibhuti:
  - use paper packets instead of plastic ones
  - use salt shakers that can be passed around
  - place a bowl of vibhuti with a spoon at the entrance or exit

2. Think of creative and cost effective ways to decorate and beautify Swami’s celebrations.
Swami says, “I do not relish the celebration of my birthday or pompous decorations for the purpose. Such ostentation is not good for anyone” (23 Nov. 1997). Consider using:

- Decorative items that can be reused for another event or consider using items made from recyclable material.
- CFL bulbs which use less energy and last 10 times longer than conventional incandescent bulbs.
- Props and costumes for plays that can be reused

We encourage all Centers to celebrate Swami’s Birthday with the awareness of Going Green. Please share your progress and any other creative alternatives with us at saiggh@gmail.com

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*I consider the day when Divinity blossoms in your heart as My birthday in you. Therefore, each of you should individually celebrate such a day as My birthday. The day when you resolve to practice My advice, to follow My directives, to translate My message into acts of service, and to engage in spiritual discipline - that day is My birthday for you.* – Baba, 23 Nov. 1975