

Can a Concrete Monkey Help Create Environmental Sustainability?

When a local gardener brought Dustin Carlson a lichen-covered concrete monkey to restore, that monkey reached out to Dustin. It may have been the monkey's thoughtful gaze or perhaps the reminder it held that concrete statues outlast human lives, either way, that moment led to a small epiphany.

A growing awareness of the impact of climate change combined with a strong belief in the power of the individual to make a difference, this garden ornament producer is doing his part to transform a concrete monkey into an icon of sustainability.

"The original monkey was probably made sometime in the '70s. At first, I was going to dust him off and fix him up and make the owner a new one," said Carlson. "Because I had a soft spot for the monkey, I agreed to do that - and off I went, arm and arm with the monkey."

Back at home, Carlson put the monkey beside his garden bench. That weekend, he watched Al Gore's famous film, *An Inconvenient Truth*. So moved, he watched it twice in a row. Like most gardeners, he feels close to the land. He works outdoors, grows tomatoes and squash and owns Countrywide Garden Ornaments, a business he started with his family shortly after graduating from school.

Growing up on Salt Spring, a Southern Gulf Island known for its organic farms, Carlson was conscious that the material he produced, while durable, wasn't very environmentally friendly. After watching *An Inconvenient Truth*, Carlson couldn't shake the feeling that the earth was beyond help and there was nothing he, as an individual, could do.

"So I went out into the garden to sit on my favourite bench to think. Guess who was squatting there looking up at me," said Carlson with a chuckle. "The monkey's posture and the pensive look on his face made me realize I was part of the problem. The problem wasn't so much what I was doing, but what I wasn't doing. This idea," he says, "struck me like a coconut. I just needed to figure out how I can help. Maybe the monkey looking up at me can be part of the solution."

This is how Carlson came up with the 100th Monkey Campaign. Joining his stock of Buddhas, birdbaths and baby quails, he's releasing the monkey to raise awareness and funds to help the David Suzuki Foundation's 'Sustainability Within A Generation' campaign.

The story behind the “100th Monkey” comes from Lyall Watson’s book *Lifetide*. Carlson was struck by this book’s account of scientists studying macaque monkeys on the Japanese island of Koshima. Every day, scientists delivered sweet potatoes to feed the monkeys. The monkeys ate these sandy potatoes for weeks, until one day, the scientists observed one of them pick the potato up and wash off the dirt. Days later, this young monkey taught its mother to do the same, and the phenomenon spread. Soon a group of 100 monkeys joined in. After this ‘tipping point’, the whole colony regularly washed off their sandy potatoes before eating them. According to Carlson, the same logic can apply to sustainability. Once enough people catch on to eco-friendly activities such as consuming less or buying sustainable products, the concept becomes common sense. “Gardeners are among the first people to convert to the green movement, since they are so connected to the land,” said Carlson. “They see changes first-hand, unusual weather, plant deformities and disrupted growing seasons. Think what will happen if everyone becomes that conscious.”

“I imagine people will put the monkey somewhere in their gardens, and hopefully it will act as a small reminder of how everyday decisions do make an impact,” said Carlson. “If I sell 2,000 monkeys, and these monkeys remind people to make even one choice to help the planet, I’ve already achieved something beyond what I alone could do.”

Gardeners can also incorporate a few eco-friendly techniques in their hobby. Using naturally sourced fertilizers like compost and nitrogen-fixing plants like legumes, even the simple act of growing one’s own vegetables or buying local produce reduces the amount of energy consumed and becomes one more step towards sustainability.

The David Suzuki Foundation recognizes that increased awareness, followed by individual support can make a difference in reversing global climate change. Carlson has pledged to donate 100% of all money from the sale of these monkeys to the David Suzuki Foundation.

Read more about the David Suzuki Foundation at: www.davidsuzuki.org

ADVERTISING FEATURE

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About us:

Countrywide Garden Ornaments are known for their honest desire to please, and deliver outstanding craftsmanship and service to the community.

Countrywide provides a broad assortment of unique ornaments from functional to decorative pieces, aimed to inspire harmony and creativity in any garden space.

Mission Statement:

The 100th Monkey Campaign:

Products that last a lifetime—A legacy that lasts forever.

“My wish is to live today without stepping on tomorrow. I think that this is the right choice, it feels *right*. I hope that others can identify with my emotion and act on their own instincts to make the right choice in every decision big or small. Everyone understands the need to make a dollar and to feed your family, but there are ways to accomplish this without harming the planet. Think about the power of a dollar. Where you spend your money is as important as who you vote for. If you use it to support an industry like organic farming or solar energy, that industry will grow.

Dr. David Suzuki knows how to help fix the planet. It's what he does best.”

-Dustin Carlson

Countrywide's Hundredth Monkey Fundraiser is supporting Dr. Suzuki and his foundation through the sale of the 100th Monkey statue.

By purchasing you will take the first step in a pledge to help propagate change.

The 100th Monkey sells for \$59.99. All money received (not just profit) goes towards the David Suzuki Foundation's 'Sustainability Within A Generation' Campaign.

To receive an update on the success of this year long fundraiser e-mail countrywide@telus.net

You may purchase this lovely garden companion at any of these fine stores:

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