

## Resolve to become energy efficient in 2012

Happy, happy New Year from all of us here at Ms. Green headquarters. It's already shaping up to be a wonderful 2012. We're busy, we're healthy, and we're wishing you all a prosperous coming year, filled with well-insulated attics and low energy bills!

The turning of the calendar fills one with such hope, such good intention! Ms. Green knows that her readers probably have many New Year's resolutions floating around their heads, some of which they've no doubt already accomplished, some of which they've let lapse, but perhaps they have space for a few more goals in the year ahead. In case her readers are looking for resolutions that are related to energy efficiency, becoming more environmentally focused, or increasing your sustainability, Ms. Green has a few suggestions.

**1.** By the year's end, commit to changing out all your conventional light bulbs to LED bulbs. Ms. Green has counseled CFLs in the past, she realizes, but LEDs actually give a far better return on the investment because they last so much longer than CFLs. If you have CFLs in place, swap them out as needed, and consider changing high-use bulbs to LEDs even before they burn out as this will truly save money for you in the long run.

**2.** Get a home energy audit. Ms. Green realizes her wonderful readers suspect she is just shilling for her business, but truly, heating and cooling our homes is the single biggest factor in the size of an individual's carbon footprint in this country. It's greater than the impact of

transportation or food! And the best way to figure out what a person needs to do to reduce home heating and cooling costs is to get a home energy audit. Ms.

Green is not going to tell you to use her family's business for this, but she is going to tell you to do your homework and ask your neighbors and friends about companies they've used for the service. She is also going to counsel you against using a company that promises a free audit. One, either you're getting a substandard audit, or two, you'll end up paying for it when it comes to the weatherization the company is selling you. You get what you pay for, and if you're not paying for it, you're not getting very much.

**3.** If you're not going to take Ms. Green's advice and get an audit, here are some simple things you can do at home to impact energy costs. First, cover your attic hatch. An unsealed, uncovered attic hatch is basically a big hole between the conditioned space inside your house and the unconditioned space in your attic. You can either make or buy a cover relatively inexpensively. A second task is to seal your escutcheons — this is the space surrounding your plumbing fixtures as they enter and leave the house. Plumbers

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plumb, and few worry about energy loss when they run pipe. Caulk will do a nice job plugging up those holes. Lastly, if your windows are drafty you can a) install weatherstripping, b) hang heavy curtains, or c) install storm windows, or in a pinch, use that plastic sealing stuff you can get at the big-box hardware stores.

**4.** Consider your ducts. Duct testing is part of a comprehensive energy audit, but if you don't mind hanging out in your crawlspace or attic, you can do a visual inspection of your ducts to make sure there aren't any obvious leaks. If there are leaks or cracks, you can install duct mastic to seal the gaps.

**5.** And finally, Ms. Green urges you to research and learn everything you can about these two issues: hydraulic fracturing for natural gas and the supposed need for more nuclear power plants in North Carolina. Ms. Green knows that this isn't a specific suggestion in regards to your personal dwellings, but it certainly has to do with energy efficiency, namely, our concern with meeting the demand of heating a cooling our homes.

Now, Ms. Green is mightily concerned with the impact fracking might have on her water quality as her home is located near the edge of the natural gas deposits found in Chatham county. But she hasn't done enough research on the subject to know if her worries are justified or not. There's so much rhetoric surrounding the issue it's very hard to figure out the truth from the hyperbole. That said, she

also knows that the very best way to deal with the demand for energy in this country — be it through fracking of natural gas deposits or our energy monopolies wanting to build new nuclear power plants — is to reduce demand by becoming more energy efficient in our own lives. It is basic, simple math! Ms. Green is absolutely stumped as to why energy efficiency doesn't get the recognition it deserves as THE solution for energy independence in this country! "For half the cost of a new nuclear power plant, we can retrofit 1,600,000 homes for energy efficiency and save the same amount of energy. Retrofitting the houses would create 220,000 new jobs — that's 90 times more jobs than you'd get from the replacement nuclear power plant." So says Energy Savvy, an energy efficiency think tank/software company who really knows how to get to the point.

Readers, does that resonate with you? How can Ms. Green drive the point home further?

On that frustrated note, Ms. Green realizes that she has found her own resolution in the year ahead: to continue to let people know about the importance of energy efficiency in our lives — not only at the individual level, but the local, state, national, and world level as well.

*Ms. Green is the combined effort of Adrienne and Mark Bashista, co-owners of Home Performance NC, an energy auditing, energy rating, and home weatherization contracting company. They can be reached on the web: www.homeperformancenc.com and by phone: 919.360.1570*

## And the words came early

by Deborah R. Meyer

Judy Hogan lives in a rich world of words. They are in the poetry and prose books tucked into the nooks and niches of her Moncure home. They are in her head, tumbling around, waiting for their chance to be put to permanence. They breathe on the pages of diaries and her numerous unpublished manuscripts. They flow effortlessly out of her as she teaches workshops and classes around the Triangle, inspiring fledgling writers to forge ahead, inspiring seasoned writers to explore their untapped resources.

But it was just one word that she used when asked what she felt when she received an email this past October notifying her that one of her fiction manuscripts had been accepted for publication. "Ecstasy," Hogan said.

Anyone who knows Judy will not be surprised that her work is so highly regarded, but will be astonished to learn that the accepted manuscript, titled *Killer Frost*, is a mystery novel.

Since she arrived in 1971, Hogan has been helping to advance North Carolina's state of poetry as she was also writing her own. In 1969, Hogan was living in California and a friend, Paul Foreman,



Judy Hogan

suggested they found a poetry journal. So, *Hyperion* was born.

Meanwhile, Foreman suggested that Hogan, who was living in Chapel Hill, start a press in North Carolina and in January of 1976, Carolina Wren Press was born. "I published Jaki Shelton Green. I left in 1991, but under my editorship we did 33 books and one children's book." She helped to found the North Carolina Writers' Network in 1984, serving as its President until 1987.

Born in Zenith, Kansas, Hogan discovered the joy of writing when she had to spend a year in bed at the end of the first grade due to rheumatic fever. "Mother brought me lots of library books and then I started writing little stories and drawing pictures. That was the beginning. I told my father when I was 10 that I was going to be a writer," Hogan said.

Hogan recovered from the effects of rheumatic fever but never from word fever. She has published five books of poetry with small presses and two prose works.

In 1980, Hogan began reading mysteries. This habit was noticed by the landlady of a bed and breakfast that Hogan would stay at when she went to Wales some summers to write poetry. In 1990 she sprained her ankle there and had to spend a few weeks in bed. Like the year of rheumatic fever recovery, Hogan discovered something new about herself. "My landlady said I should write a murder. So I started plotting it and set it in her B&B with Mrs. Merrett in it. She always had opinions and made a good character," Hogan said. Her fictional name is Evelyn Truelove.

The heroine of this first novel is Penny Weaver who has gone to Wales to get away from her responsibilities for a while. She

falls in love with a Welsh policeman. They get around the transatlantic issue by spending six months in Wales, and six months in central NC in a fictional town of Riverdell, county of Shagbark. The town according to Hogan has elements of Pittsboro, Saxapahaw and Moncure.

Is Penny Weaver Hogan? "Pretty much," admits Hogan.

Hogan has written eight mysteries that feature Penny Weaver and is about to start her ninth. The *Killer Frost* manuscript is the sixth in the series and was a finalist in the Malice Domestic contest. Despite this achievement, no agent answered Hogan's queries about representing her. So Hogan became her own agent.

The book will come out on Sept. 1, 2012 and cost around \$15 and it will also be available on Nook and Kindle for \$2.99.

Hogan's backyard is home to an orchard, a garden, and 14 chickens. She bakes her own bread and makes soup, freezing her bounty for when the garden is fallow. She lives on \$1000 a month. She needs her food to eat so this does take up some of the routine of her days. But it is the words, the writing, that get the most time. For without that, Hogan would starve.

*Deborah R. Meyer is a Chatham writer.*

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