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Shannon Wentworth

There's no slacking on vacation – at least not with Sweet. Combining eco-tourism, volunteer-oriented tourism, and girl power, each trip is designed to offer the best in travel while giving back to the community. Here, we caught up with CEO and founder Shannon Wentworth before she took off again.

When was your green turning point?

In 1990, I went to my first Earth Day celebration and learned that CFCs in Styrofoam and aerosols were destroying the ozone layer. All of the sudden, I saw how small every day actions could have a big negative impact on the world.

What's your little green secret?

I try to find less resource-intensive ways of doing things. For instance, I'd scan something and send you a PDF attachment, rather than send paper to your fax number. I use every piece of paper in my office back and front. I want to get to a place where I don't have to use paper at all. I'm a long way from there, but it's fun to challenge myself to think of ways to do things without paper or other precious resources.

If you could snap your fingers and create a green product or service that doesn't exist yet, what would it be?

How about a car that runs on air, but drives like it's got a hemi under the hood? I want to see the air car as a sports car that does 0 to 60 in some absurdly fast time and a truck with serious hauling capacity.

What are your favorite sustainable items in your closet?

I have a few bamboo shirts that are divine. They are so soft and comfortable. I have really cute organic cotton jeans by Levi's. Also, I have a cool hat made from recycled plastic. I think fashion has a long way to go in terms of sustainability, but it's encouraging to see large companies (like Levi's and the Gap) starting to use organic cotton and bamboo. I'd love

CULTURE

Shannon Wentworth

CEO of Sweet (an eco travel company)

"All of us in the travel industry have an obligation and a vested interest in protecting the beautiful places we visit. I hope we can demonstrate that you can run a successful, profitable business while also being a passionate steward of the environment."

What's something you hope to pass down to your children (and children's children)?

Interconnectedness. I want my children to understand that what they do matters to the world. Yes, it may be a small thing to turn off a light when you leave a room, but if it's a habit you have throughout your life, you'll save tons and tons of natural resources in your lifetime. We're all in this together.

What's your recommended summer reading list?

There's a great essay called "The Rivet Poppers" by Paul and Anne Ehrlich. It's a wonderful illustration of why we're all important to our ecosystem. Ursula K. Le Guin's essay "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." It reminds me to be true to my values, even when they're a pain in the ass or conflict with my material desires. The Mysterious Stranger and The Facts Concerning The Recent Carnival Of Crime In Connecticut by Mark Twain totally blows my mind. I love Banker to the Poor by Muhammad Yunus. I still love 50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth. If everyone did a handful of those things, we'd have global warming licked in no time.

What keeps you up at night?

It's more like what wakes me up in the morning. I have a sump pump under my house that turns on when my basement collects water. I live on a slope, so the water from my backyard garden finds its way into my basement, activating my sump pump at roughly 6.38am every day. I rigged it so that when the water is pumped out of the basement, it waters my front yard.

What's your not-so-green guilty pleasure?

French fries. They're so good and yet so bad.

Which environmental groups and nonprofits get your stamp of approval?

Care2.com
CarbonFund.org

BLOG ROLL

OZO BRANDS

BEST OF DAILY LIFE



W | Travel

07/15/09

In the Pound

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T | Design

07/14/09

Honest Ali

Honesty is important to most people. But (because of all the green-washing), it's especially...



M | Style

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PEOPLE



Una Kim

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REPORT



Think Before You Print

We get reminded to think before we print all the time but we rarely stop to ask why. Besides paper,...

starting to use organic cotton and bamboo. I'd love to see someone come up with a second use for dryer lint. Every time I throw it out, I think, "I'd sure like to have a hat this soft."

What are your favorite sustainable elements of your home?

I love my solar panels. I'm obsessed with the meter that tells me how much carbon dioxide I've kept out of the atmosphere (3,500 pounds of carbon dioxide removed from the atmosphere each year, plus a negative electric bill). I turned part of my garage into an office. In the remodel, I used bamboo flooring, which we also have at Sweet. My favorite thing is my organic vegetable garden. I love walking outside and seeing what's for dinner.

If you had five minutes in the Oval Office, what would you say?

I'd encourage President-elect Obama to install solar panels, insulation, a gray water tank for irrigation and a vegetable garden. How about a bulletproof, hybrid limo? Of course, I'd also like to talk about tax incentives for green business practices.

What's on your wish list?

I want to make water bottles from biodegradable, non-toxic materials, like cornstarch.

What has been your biggest lifestyle change?

I became vegetarian about 20 years ago. That's probably the single biggest individual thing I've done. It's something I am conscious of every day, especially when I travel.

With the launch of Sweet, I've found a way to put my environmental values into a values-based business. Sweet is an eco-friendly, volunteer-oriented lesbian travel company. Basically, we've found a way to make conventional travel totally guilt free by offsetting all of our carbon and offering our guests the opportunity to do volunteer projects in the places we travel. It's so simple: We travel the world and leave it better than we found it. Additionally, we offset all of the carbon from all of our business operations. Everything Sweet does is completely CarbonFree, thanks to our friends at CarbonFund.org.

CarbonFund.org
Idaho Rivers United
Bayou Rebirth
The Breast Cancer Fund
The Susan G. Komen Foundation
Defenders of Wildlife
Environmental Defense
The Charles Darwin Foundation
The Nature Conservancy
World Wildlife Fund

Also, since Sweet was founded, we've donated over \$95,000 in cash, in-kind contribution and fundraising for the following groups:

National Center for Lesbian Rights
Equality California
Stop AIDS Project
San Francisco AIDS Foundation
Human Rights Campaign
Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center
AquaGirl Foundation
Seattle Scores (a Seattle-based after school literacy program)
Atlanta Lesbian Health Initiative
Horizon Foundation

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