

the proposal

February 2008

Dear Dr. Wallace,

The time has come for Christian Americans to respond to swelling global challenges. In these times of drought, world hunger, resource shortage, and struggling economies, the importance of waste reduction and preservation becomes increasingly urgent.

For all its youth and enthusiasm, the APU community can be a challenging place to foster environmental awareness. Because students, administrators, and faculty are not directly accountable for the resources they use and waste in classrooms, living areas, and offices, the results are not surprising: lights burn unnecessarily during the day . . . and 30-minute hot showers are the norm in winter months. Without the opportunity to see a substantial impact made at home or abroad, even the best-intentioned conservationists find themselves discouraged. After all, will a thirsty child in Laos ever see a drop of clean water from our conservation efforts here at APU? Sadly, the answer is no. And as long as the answer remains so, this harsh reality imprisons our potential, oppresses the poor, and ravages God's earth.

But what if our answer could be yes? What if we could send the surplus from unused resources to those in need? What if we, by merely deciding to waste less, could have a direct, positive impact on others around the world? With a little bit of creativity and hard work, we can.

Enter the Scraps Initiative, an inventive, alternative conservation project that combines environmental responsibility with matters of social justice and global relief.

We propose that for 40 days, the entire APU community make a concerted effort to conserve water, gas, and electricity. Over the course of the month, the efforts will ultimately save the university a considerable percentage on its monthly utilities bill. The surplus funds would then be donated to those in need. For instance, the amount saved on water would go to providing fresh water wells overseas; the amount saved on gas and electricity could support sustainable housing to those without. In this way, we ship our "scraps" to those in need.

The benefits are multifaceted, yet infinitely interconnected. As a university, we develop responsible, environmentally conscious habits, all while learning what it means to sacrifice for the well being of others. We immediately realize two of God's most important calls for us as 21st century Christians: caring for creation and caring for the poor.

Will a thirsty child in Laos ever see a drop of clean water from our conservation efforts here at APU? For once, let us respond to this question with a resounding "Yes!"—a yes to the child, a yes to the Scraps Initiative, and a yes to Christ.

Sincerely,
Daniel Baker

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'" Matthew 25:35-40 (NIV).

a drop in the bucket

by Cynndie Hoff

the process

Nearly three billion people worldwide—half the developing world—lack access to adequate water sanitation, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). That's almost 40 percent of the world's population. Unsafe drinking water and inadequate sanitation for hygiene contribute to about 88 percent of deaths from diarrheal diseases alone, including more than 1.4 million children under the age of five. WHO claims that improving water supply, sanitation, hygiene, and management of water resources can prevent 10 percent of the global disease burden and stop more than three million deaths caused by diarrhea, malaria, malnutrition, and drowning.¹

No one denies the overwhelming problem, but efforts to bring relief can feel like a mere drop in the bucket when faced with the enormity of the



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plight. Dan Baker '10 witnessed the tragedy firsthand when he spent a semester in Africa as a junior. "When I came home, the waste I saw here really hit me," he said. "I had just come from a place where people were dying of thirst and starvation, and it killed me to watch people in the cafeteria throw away so much food. I thought, 'If only we could send them our scraps.'"

The thought grew into a passionate, innovative plan that he presented to President Jon Wallace, DBA, last spring. Together with a core group of fellow students, Baker proposed the Scraps Initiative as a way for the APU community to not only

conserve resources for the sake of good stewardship, but to also equate the effort with a direct impact on real people in need. By mobilizing the campus in a cooperative conservation movement, calculating the savings, and using the money to dig wells in developing countries, Baker envisioned a tangible way to actually send the scraps.

The proposal met with optimism and questions. "It sounded like a great idea," said Toney Snyder, assistant director of environmental stewardship, "but there were many variables to consider. Would we compare dollars spent or usage of resources? Because utilities are a

commodity and prices fluctuate, we decided to focus on usage. But that, too, fluctuates, so we agreed to identify the lowest usage over the past three years, and anything below that would be considered savings."

Another significant variable involved how the savings would translate into clean water for a thirsty child in another country. The answer came when Baker learned about Lifewater International, an organization that equips and empowers communities in developing countries to obtain safe water, implement adequate sanitation, promote effective hygiene, and share the knowledge of Jesus' love. "We are



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“After all, will a thirsty child in Laos ever see a drop of clean water for our conservation efforts here at APU?”

that this temporary sacrifice could become a permanent lifestyle. “The Scraps Initiative opened my eyes to see how I can use resources better as a Christ follower. This is exactly how we should be living; this is how our

university should be functioning. It’s part of the discipleship process,” said Scott Haskins ’09.

For 40 days and nights, students limited their lighting by using natural light when possible, taping down light

switches to prevent unnecessary use, and assigning night-watch groups to douse lights burning unnecessarily. They took military showers, dreaded their hair, grew beards, and flushed only when necessary.

Meanwhile across campus, offices powered down computers and let temperatures rise an extra four degrees before powering up air conditioners. Snyder believes that these sacrifices will do more than just

so appreciative of the APU community for sacrificing in this way,” said David Finley, Lifewater’s director of development and community. “In partnership with World Vision, the Millennium Water Alliance, and six others, we recently received a matching grant from United States Agency for International Development (USAID). For every dollar we raise, USAID will match it with two, so we can make boreholes, build water tanks, and construct latrines. APU’s donation will help us do that.”

Inspired by that realization, Baker and his team hit the ground running. Considering they would be asking the entire campus to sacrifice creature comforts, Lent seemed the perfect time to activate the Scraps Initiative. They immediately canvassed the university with flyers, emails, chapel announcements, and word of mouth, preparing everyone on campus to save as much electricity, water, and gas as possible during the Lenten season.

Melissa Dorman ’09 joined the cause immediately. “I spent four months in Uganda during my Global Learning Term and saw the need firsthand,” she said. “The Scraps Initiative combines environmental stewardship with social justice issues. I’ve seen each work independently, but this does both. And students really got into it. Resident advisors rallied the students and encouraged them to turn off lights, take shorter showers—everyone did what they could.”

Once a community vision for the concept caught fire, focus transferred from immediate savings to the bigger picture. Students realized



ALEXANDRIA HUSBY



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save money in the short run. "The best thing I see coming out of this is behavior modification. Christ calls us to sacrifice luxuries and stay focused on Him. This is a step in the right direction. I'm so glad President Wallace approved this project," said Synder.

"I am pleased that students are engaged with wise stewardship decisions," said Wallace. "The concept that money saved on utility expenses here in Azusa can be used for fresh water wells in Laos has empowered this student body and energized our faculty and staff."

And apparently, the enthusiasm is contagious. "I believe this can be a model for other universities as well," said Baker. "I can see Christian colleges banding together and doing this during Lent every year. I've already talked with students at Biola University. It's exciting to think of this

concept spreading across businesses and borders and creating a whole new culture."

The model stands as an excellent example for any organization seeking to save money, tread lightly on the Earth, and directly address the global water sanitation problem. Through the Scraps Initiative, organizations like Lifewater International, and the willingness to sacrifice just a little, the proverbial drop in the bucket can actually make a big splash.

¹ <http://www.who.int/research/en/>



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the results

After 40 days of conserving water, gas, and electricity, the APU community saved a total of \$10,000. In the hands of Lifewater International, that money will be matched by another donor, increase to \$20,000, and go directly to Lifewater's Laos Project.

LAOS FACTS

- Less than half the Laotian rural population has sustainable, safe water.
- Only 20 percent can access a private bathroom.
- Communal basins catch rainwater for washing hands, brushing teeth, and drinking.
- Rural Laotians routinely drink E. coli-contaminated water.
- Diarrhea is the second leading cause of childhood deaths in Laos.

Over the course of two years, Lifewater will work with a Lao-American business to establish a low-cost, household-level water filter manufacturing factory and distribution operation. The business will use training from Lifewater to produce, market, and deliver the subsidized filters to needy community members while also providing much-needed hygiene and sanitation education.



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