

Where's the party?

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It's as if Al Gore kidnapped Mr. Clean with the help of Martha Stewart, and they decided to invite friends over to celebrate. Or, according to some media outlets, it's simply the evolution of our mother's Tupperware parties—a chic new form of eco-friendly bonding centered around baking soda-based creamy soft scrubs instead of bins for last night's leftovers. Whichever way you frame it, Green Cleaning Parties, a concept created earlier this year by Missoula-based Women's Voices for the Earth (WVE), have become a hit.

“According to our database, 215 parties have been held since March and another 164 are already booked for the future—and this covers events in the United States, Canada and one in Singapore,” says WVE Communications Director Ali Soloman, who has fielded media inquiries about the program from Fox News, the New York Times, Chicago Tribune and “Good Morning America.” “What we find is that as soon as, say, Fox News in Texas does a segment about it, we get a flood of requests from that area.”

To help educate consumers about hazardous toxins found in glass cleaners and laundry detergents—think glycol ethers (linked to infertility) or phthalates (they reduce sperm counts in men)—WVE developed a slick DIY kit of alternatives. The kit—available in hardcopy for a \$15 donation through WVE's web site—features a short DVD, a set of six different recipe cards for everything from all-purpose cleaners to furniture polish, and an instructional booklet on how to make the products. To help enhance the community aspect, WVE also includes party invitations.

“We hosted a party at the store and it was full—we had 20 people attend and we even had to turn people away at the door,” says Elaine Sheff, owner and herbalist at Meadowsweet Herbs. “It's fun, and people get to do it themselves, and I think there's something about that that's empowering.”

WVE wasn't necessary surprised by the popularity of the kits—“We really had no idea what to expect,” says Solomon—but their challenge now is capitalizing on the campaign to help further their cause.

“You can't buy your way out of this problem,” says Solomon. “There's a level of advocacy with the Green Cleaning Parties where it's not just people having fun hosting get-togethers, but we're also asking them to call their representatives, to call the manufacturers and to ask for change. And if they want to donate to WVE too, that'd be great.”