

Save Money...

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Frugal Green



December 2009

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West Geauga High wins national 'Green Your School' contest, \$5,000

West Geauga High School in Chesterland is the grand-prize winner in the national "Green Your School" contest.

The Student Conservation Association (SCA) and NBC Universal Foundation challenged eco-conscious high schoolers to submit their school's best green-related projects. After reaching out to hundreds of thousands of classrooms nationwide, a panel of distinguished judges, including NBC News' Anne Thompson and environmentalist Simran Sethi, selected West Geauga as the grand prize winner of \$5,000. Two runner-up prizes of \$2,500 were also awarded to Boston Latin School in Boston, Mass. and Amphitheater High School in Tucson, Ariz.

Funding for the "Green Your School" contest comes from the NBC Universal Foundation in connection with NBC Universal's Green Initiative, "Green is Universal."

"Congratulations to all the winning schools. There were so many remarkable and inspiring projects, that it made going from nearly 100 entries down to 10 finalists and three winners incredibly challenging," said Dale Penny, President of SCA. "These talented young people demon-

strate a willingness to tackle complex environmental issues in an effort to reduce their schools' carbon footprint. We are pleased to encourage a new generation of conservation-minded green experts."

The "Green Your School" contest engaged students in conservation projects that improved, restored, or beautified their school's environment. To be eligible, entries had to be student-led and have been started after August 1, 2008. Projects were judged on their environmental impact on the health of the school, sustainability, and the involvement of other students, teachers, administrators and/or the outside community.

"At a time when environmental awareness and understanding is critical, NBC Universal is proud to show our continued commitment to support green initiatives and educate the next generation in meaningful ways," said Susan Haspel, Vice President, Corporate Community Affairs, NBC Universal. "Young people want to know where and when they can make the greatest environmental difference and this contest motivates them to take action."

FRUGAL GREEN

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Your feedback is important

Frugal Green is about building a local community of readers who enjoy saving money and the planet; who understand resources are both precious and finite; who shop locally and support home-grown service providers and businesses.

We encourage your feedback and participation:

Do you know someone who has mastered the green lifestyle, who's a super-frugal shopper or has learned to live better on less? We'd love to feature them in a future issue. Give us a name and phone number and we'll take care of the rest.

Do you have tips to share with readers, a nifty idea for living greener or favorite place to save money? Share them with us!

By mail: Frugal Green, attention Carl Feather, c/o Star Beacon, PO Box 2100, Ashtabula, OH 44005-2100.

By e-mail: cfeather@starbeacon.com, include FRUGAL GREEN in subject line

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How to reduce use of paper towels, cleaners

DEAR SARA: I'm trying to use more natural cleaners around the house, including homemade cleaners (so much cheaper!). I read somewhere that microfiber towels are the best for cleaning glass and are great to use on floors with a Swiffer. Do you have a source where I can get these cheaply? I've done a Google search and looked on eBay, but I'll bet you know a way to get them for a lower price. Thanks so much! — Christy, Texas

DEAR CHRISTY: You can get them in the automotive department at discount department stores. They're often available at dollar stores, too. To make them last longer,

don't use bleach or fabric softener when washing and drying them. They also attract lint, so avoid washing and drying them with items such as towels. But they're not for everyone. Many people don't like how they feel.

DEAR SARA: I need a paper-towel intervention! I am trying to be more "green" in our home. Not only because it's better for the earth but mainly because I can't stand choking on chemical fumes when I'm cleaning and because it isn't frugal to spend \$10 a month on paper towels. I've done small things here and there. Switched to CFL bulbs, we use cloth shopping bags, and I use all-natural cleaners. My next big step is trying to eliminate the use of paper towels. I'll admit, I love them. I use them for everything. Wiping the counters, cleaning the sink, spot mopping the floor. But I do feel guilty about going through so much paper, so I'm thinking of switching to rags or cloths that I can easily wash when they're soiled. Do you recommend any particular products? Do you think it would be sufficient if I just picked up a few packages of dishcloths? — Kim, Florida

DEAR KIM: You'll have to find what you like to use. I place a stack of cheap white washcloths on the countertop in the kitchen. I use them for cleaning and drying hands. I use microfiber cloths, too. Bar-mop towels are cheap. You can cut your older towels into small rags or start looking for cloth diapers at garage sales. White cloths work well because they can be bleached. You might enjoy alternatives such as a Skoy cloth (www.skoycloth.com), a Euro-Cloth or a sponge cloth (www.twistclean.com).

Instead of trying to eliminate them completely, simply try to keep paper towels put away and not easily accessible. Place your alternative cloths in their place and you'll automatically use less, but you'll still have some paper towels in the house if you discover a task you prefer to use them for.

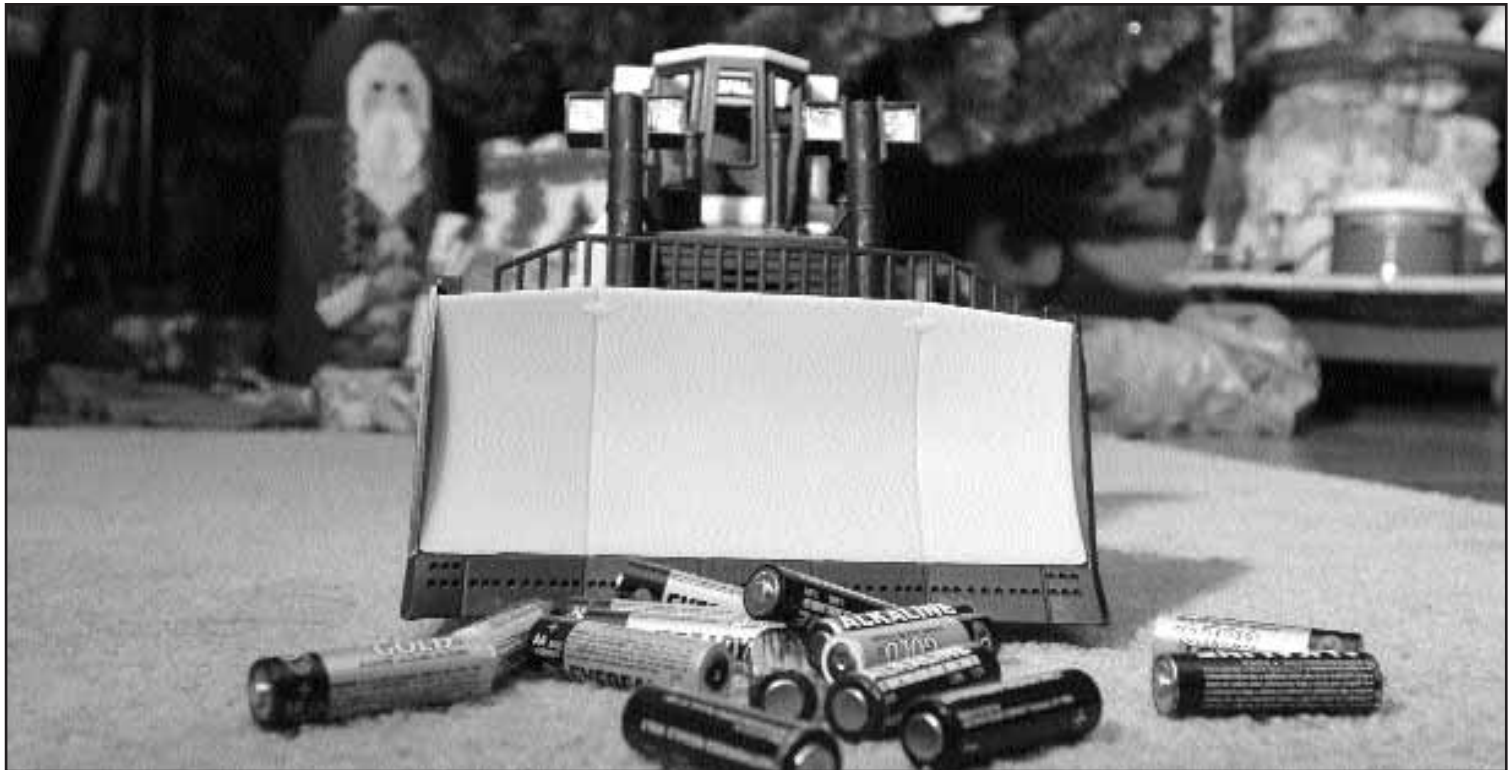
Sara Noel is the owner of Frugal Village (www.frugalvillage.com), a Web site that offers practical, money-saving strategies for everyday living.

Frugal Living

by

SARA NOEL

Batteries not included



A TYPICAL battery-powered toy will consume scores of batteries in its relatively short lifetime and, in the process, burn a hole in your wallet and pollute landfills if you use disposable cells. Rechargeable batteries are much easier on the environment and save money in the long run, although they require a larger investment up front.

Buying batteries for all those toys and gadgets is a hidden expense; save money, go green with rechargeables

By **CARL E. FEATHER**
Staff Writer
cfeather@starbeacon.com

“Batteries not included.” Chances are, at least one of the Christmas gifts you’ll receive or give this year will have those dreaded words printed on the box.

Get out the wallet ... no, wait ... Before running to your local dollar store to buy a package of those made-in-China economy

batteries, you ought to consider a greener, more economical alternative, the rechargeable battery.

Indeed, if you have little Christmas money burning a hole in your stocking, or if you are still in the throes of gift buying, a battery charger and assortment of high-capacity cells make a green, thoughtful gift for yourself, another person and the environment.

Virtually every big-box, electronics and hardware store sells the chargers and cells. Here are

tips to help you make the right selection:

1. Take stock of all the toys, electronic devices and other items in your home that use batteries. Note the size and quantity of batteries required, then plan to purchase enough cells to operate the devices, plus extras to keep your devices powered while the cells are being recharged.

2. Don’t buy rechargeable alkaline. See **BATTERIES**, Page 7

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Dry your clothes for free this winter



A WOODEN clothes rack can be placed near free-standing stoves and heat ducts to take advantage of the heat for drying your clothes. This model, which costs \$60, is available at Cherry Valley Furniture on Hayes Road.

The warmth needed to get the job done is already in the air, all you need to do is tap into it

By **CARL E. FEATHER**

Staff Writer

cfeather@starbeacon.com

If you heat your house with a wood, pellet, corn, coal or other free-standing burner or fireplace insert, you can reap an additional savings on your electric or gas bill by using the heater to dry your clothes as heat your home.

As an added benefit, you'll put more humidity in the air, often an indoor environmental problem in the winter. And if you use a scented detergent, your home will pick up that fresh scent, as well, as the clothes dry.

The cost of drying a load of clothes in a typical home dryer is pegged at around 50 cents, according to several environmental Web sites. If you do 10 loads of laundry a week, that's \$20 a month you could be saving by using the heat from your alternative-fuel burner.

All you need is some type of clothes rack that can be set up near the stove. You can build one yourself out of 1 1/2-inch PVC pipe and elbows if a rectangular rack will do the job for you (use "T" fittings to

create the legs. Or you can purchase a folding rack or "clothes horse" at hardware, big-box or Amish supply store.

Lizzie Miller, co-owner of Cherry Valley Furniture, 5391 Hayes Road, Cherry Valley, says she uses two of the wooden racks in her home.

The store sells wooden folding racks in small, medium and large sizes. When expanded the racks are about 6-feet tall and provide multiple rungs over which to drape or pin the damp laundry.

Lizzie puts one of the racks next to their wood stove in the basement. Because the stove feeds an upstairs heat register, she puts a second rack over the register to take advantage of the warmth rising from the duct work.

She says damp clothing usually dries in about an hour. If your rack is going to be in the way during the day time, you can do your laundry before you go to bed and let it dry on a rack over night.

The wood racks sold at Cherry Valley Furniture range in price from \$50 to \$70 each. They are made of quality hardwood, fold up neatly and take up little space.

The Amish hang their clothing outside to dry in all kinds of temperatures, even below freezing. Lizzie feels that laundry that is first frozen on the line, then allowed to finish drying next to a stove,



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See HEAT, Page 5

Cheap reads, discount food

Head to Kinsman for the largest selection of used books in the region, plus a discount grocery store

By **CARL E. FEATHER**
Staff Writer
cfeather@starbeacon.com

KINSMAN — January. A great month to snuggle down with a book and mug of tea.

Frugal readers know that there's no shortage of places to buy inexpensive books. Library book sales top the list; check the Star Beacon Datebook for upcoming sales.

There's also Lofthouse Books, 4535 Main Ave., Ashtabula, which offers an excellent selection of used books by category.

If you don't mind driving to northern Trumbull County, and have a lot of time to browse for books, the Market Square in Kinsman (Route 7, south of Andover), offers the largest selection of used books in the region.

Housed in what was Kinsman's "first skyscraper," Market Square is an eclectic store that sprawls over three floors

of a department store building dating back to the late 1800s. Owner Don Sutton has been selling books, used items, wallpaper and new essentials for nearly a quarter of a century, and he keeps expanding his selection.

Last summer, Sutton purchased a book store in the Akron area and hauled tens of thousands of books to Kinsman in two freight trailers. He hired a few high school students to help him move all those books into two former apartments on the second floor of the building.

"For two days, the four of us worked with a lift to bring the books upstairs," Sutton says. "(The students) were pretty tired when they got done at the end of the day. I told them to think about how tired they are and ask themselves if they want to do manual labor for the rest of their lives."

Sutton's books are priced



CARL E. FEATHER / Star Beacon

DON SUTTON estimates that he has more than 100,000 books in his Market Square use bookstore. The store is right off State Route 7 in Kinsman.

from 50 cents to \$50. Home schoolers can find all kinds of \$1 textbooks in the basement of the store.

He also has thousands of phonograph records, new wallpaper and rooms full of lightly used items.

While you're in Kinsman, walk down the street to the Kinsman General

Store, owned by Bonnie and Nick Gulu. The store offers salvage/discount groceries, as well as a selection of used items. It is exceptionally well organized for a salvage-type grocery store and offers discounts, on average, of about 50 percent off the prices you'd pay at a regu-

lar grocery store.

The general store is open Monday through Saturday. Hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays, till 4 p.m. on Saturday.

Market Square opens at 10 a.m. every day and is open until 6 p.m. weekdays, till 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

Heat

Continued from 4

turns out exceptionally nice, with brighter whites and a crisp, fresh smell.

"They dry a lot faster than if you just take them out of the machine and bring them over to the rack," she says.

Individuals with large, central registers typically found in old houses can also take advantage of these drying racks by plac-

ing one over the register. And, if you have the patience, you can use these racks to dry your clothes indoors even your home is equipped with more traditional heating sources. Running a box fan near the rack can help speed drying and, when strategically placed, help distribute the heat in your home.

If you have a basement where you run a dehumidifier, you'll find that hanging the clothes in the area

of the appliance should expedite drying. If you have a sun porch with a lot of windows, or even a sliding glass door with exposure to the afternoon sun, you can make use of the sun's warmth to dry your clothes there. Those with a warm bathroom might want to string a line across the bathtub to use for drying clothes overnight. And if your house is blessed with radiant heat, park your clothes dryer near a radiator.

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Top resolutions for green living in 2010

Justine Segal and Nancy Poletti, founders of eco-company everydayJun, offer these simple resolutions to help live green in 2010:

Resolve to Reduce

■ Over 1 trillion pieces of junk mail are delivered each year. Instead of going directly to the recycling bin, vow to eliminate those unwanted catalogues and credit offers before they arrive at your house. Sites like www.donotmail.org and www.dmachoice.org can help you manage the mail you actually want, and prevent the rest from cluttering your life.

■ Planning a birthday party in 2010? Resolve to make it an environmentally-friendly one. With the ECHOage www.echoage.com birthday party service, guests make secure online contributions that are pooled for the purchase of one memorable group gift or to support one meaningful cause in lieu of bringing superfluous, wrapped and packaged presents.

Resolve to Reuse and Recycle

■ January is the perfect time to de-clutter. Take time for thoughtful purging this year. If it doesn't meet the 12-month rule (hasn't been worn or seen in 12 months), it's fair game. Consider posting your items on www.freecycle.org, or if speed is the name of the game, check out www.goodwill.org to find your nearest donation center. Local places of worship are also a good way to ensure that your unwanted items find a good home.

■ Host a "white elephant gift exchange" where each guest brings a wrapped item (in newspaper or other recycled paper) that they are willing to part with. Gifts are numbered and drawn at random. Assuming you get something you want, it's a fun way to change your décor and keep stuff out of the landfills.

■ Choose to reuse at lunchtime. Resolving to go green at lunchtime with everydayJun's hip, modern and eco-friendly Waste Free Lunch Kits www.everydayjun.com will save an estimated 1,225 plastic bags, single-use water bottles and disposable plastic utensils from the landfill per person per year.

■ Make this the year that you recycle responsibly. Home Depot offers safe recycling of any expired, unbroken CFL bulbs at each of their stores.

Also check out www.greenamericatoday.org/pubs/greenpages as a great resource.

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Recession leads to divorce for many blue-collar workers

By Linda Shrieves

The Orlando Sentinel
ORLANDO, Fla. — Stand on the front lines of the recession, as therapist Erica Karlinsky has, and the view for married couples isn't rosy.

Karlinsky, a Lake Mary, Fla., psychologist, now spends a lot of her time counseling men who've lost their jobs — or wives who are dealing with an unemployed husband who won't get off the sofa or won't stop crying.

The stress of job losses is impacting families from all backgrounds, but perhaps none are more affected than blue-collar families, who have been hit hard by the recession, according to a new report from the National Marriage Project.

And experts worry that when the recession ends and the economy improves, the divorce rate will spike again — with many of the divorces concentrated among the working class. That may further widen what sociologists call the nation's "divorce divide" — a growing gap between the divorce rates of working-class Americans and college-educated Americans.

"Working-class couples are already vulnerable," said Brad Wilcox, director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia. "The recession is probably shaping up to be one more factor driving working-class marriages down."

Men have borne the brunt of this recession, accounting for 75 percent of the job losses, accord-

ing to the report, titled, "The State of Our Unions, Marriage in America 2009: Money & Marriage." And blue-collar men have been hit hard. In September, the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that 4.9 percent of college-educated women and 5 percent of college-educated men were unemployed, while 8.6 percent of women with a high-school diploma and 11.1 percent of men with a high-school diploma had lost their jobs.

For those men particularly, the recession has been devastating.

"I'm seeing depression in men and a sense of hopelessness," said Karlinsky. "These are men who are very surprised by having to look for a new job in their 40s or their early 50s. They were safe; they were secure. ... and now they're feeling very paralyzed."

While the report delivered some good news — the number of Americans getting divorced has dropped since the recession began — experts think that may be temporary. The nation's divorce rate fell from 17.5 percent in 2007 to 16.9 percent in 2008.

If the Great Depression is any gauge, divorces will spike again as the economy improves. In 1932, during the depths of the depression, the divorce rate bottomed out — 25 percent lower than it had been in 1929. But those years of hardship took their toll. In 1934, the divorce rate started climbing again, and by 1940, the

divorce rate was higher than it had been before the depression, said Andrew Cherlin, a sociology professor at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

Cherlin and others predict that we'll see the same kind of divorce echo after this recession.

"I think we'll continue to see a strong divide between the haves and the have-nots in our economy," Cherlin said. "And, for maybe the first time in history, young men without college educations no longer think they can have a better life than their fathers have."

Since the 1970s, demographers and sociologists have watched the pattern develop: Couples with college educations are more likely to stay married and blue-collar families are more likely to get divorced. While finances aren't the sole reason couples split, arguing over money is one of the best predictors of divorce, according to the report.

"The erosion of good jobs for working class men is really corrosive for marriage," Wilcox said. And it holds true for almost everyone — blacks, Latinos and whites.

One reason, say experts, is that men are expected to be the primary breadwinner, even in families in which the wife works. But as high-paying manufacturing and union jobs have disappeared, it has been harder for men without college degrees to make a good living.

Keeping disposable batteries out of landfills is costly

By **CARL E. FEATHER**
Staff Writer
cfeather@starbeacon.com

Part of the price of rechargeable Nickel-Cadmium (NiCad) batteries goes toward recycling them.

Finding places to recycle your household batteries can be a challenge, but if you are willing to pay the money for shipping and recycling, you can collect your batteries in a box and mail them to Battery Solutions.

Order their iRecycle Kit by going to www.batteryrecycling.com/residential. The cost is \$34.95 and includes pre-paid shipping and recycling charges. Its capacity is approximately 12 pounds, or about one-year's worth of exhausted batteries from the average U.S. household.

You can toss into the box any kind of dry-cell battery (AAA, AA, C, D, etc.), plus those from power-tools, laptops, cell phones, cameras and similar electronic-device batteries. Both one-use and rechargeable batteries are accepted.

Once it is filled, you seal the box and drop it in the mail.

You can also search for retailers that recycle batteries at their stores by logging onto

Earth911.com or call2recycle.com. A quick check of the Earth911 site showed that most retailers in our area recycle only lead-acid cells, but if you have old NiCad (Nickel-Cadmium) and other rechargeable batteries you'd like to dispose of, your nearest Radio Shack store will accept them.

Lloyd Morris, franchise holder of the Jefferson store, said a box in the store is designed to accept any

battery that qualifies for the retailer's recycling program, "Charge Up to Recycle."

"Nickel-Metal, Ni-Cad," he says. "Anything that fits in the opening on the box. Any rechargeable. Unfortunately, we don't have a program for alkalines."

The recycling is handled by the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation (RBRC), which is funded by a percentage of every NiCad battery sale.

Morris said the retailer, which has honed in being a one-stop center for battery replacements, offers generous discounts on batteries and chargers to replace the ones you recycle at the store.

Batteries

Continued from 3

lines or Ni-Cads. Not only do they contain hazardous heavy metals, they have the notorious memory problem that reduces their charging capacity. If you have old nickel-cadmium batteries floating around the house, take them to your nearest Radio Shack store, which offers recycling of the spent cells. And forget the "rechargeable alkaline" batteries; at best, you'll get 50 charges from them before they die. And they must be completely discharged before you can fill 'em up again.

3. Go for nickel-metal hydride (NiMH). Yeah, they still have some heavy metals in them, but you'll get hundreds of charges out of every battery and can recycle them when they will no longer hold a charge.

Lithium rechargeable batteries are also coming onto the market, although in a

limited selection of cells. If you have devices that use 9-volt and CR-123 cells, you might want to look into this option, but it's expensive. A 9-volt lithium can cost around \$20.

4. Go for high-capacity cells. Pay attention to the "mAh" rating on the cells you purchase. "mAh" stands for milli-ampere hours. It's a measure of energy, and a higher number is better, especially in devices that place a high demand on the cells, such as camera flash units. At a minimum, look for cells rated 1800 mAh or higher to get the most energy from your investment.

5. Get the best charger you can afford. A good charger can make your batteries last longer and help revive cells you might otherwise pitch in the recycle-box.

Some of the features to look for include rapid and "soft" charge modes, the ability to "condition" cells by running them through a discharge/charge cycle, and flexibility in charging/cell configurations. You can pay

up to \$100 or more for a high-tech charger and several sets of batteries, but it's a sound investment, especially if you have high-demand devices like electronic flashes and audio players that receive frequent use.

Highly recommended are both the batteries and chargers sold by Thomas Distributing (www.thomas-distributing.com). For those who want to charge "green," Thomas Distributing even sells solar-powered battery chargers (about \$80). The company is top-notch to deal with in every way. Got battery questions? Call them at (800) 821-2769.

6. Use your cells frequently. All rechargeable batteries discharge rather quickly, usually in 30 to 60 days. Set a schedule for refreshing cells in flashlights and similar devices that don't get regular use. And make sure to allow time to give your new batteries a full charge before using them.

7. Consider the USB-CELL if you need AA cells

for your electronic devices. The British company Moxia Energy has come up with a clever solution to the problem of bulky chargers: their USB-CELL has the charger built into the battery.

The cell plugs into a USB port on your desktop or laptop computer. The power from the port charges the battery. You simply pull off a cap from the top (positive end) of the cell to expose the USB connection.

This solution is not for the impatient; it takes about five hours to fully charge the cell. Rated for about 500 charges, the batteries are still a good deal, despite their price tag of \$17 to \$20 per pair

— remember, you don't have to buy a charger with these cells.

While available only in AA size, Moxia plans to release other incarnations of this clever device in the months to come.

Google "Moxia USB-CELL" to find a retailer, or go to USBcell.com, for more information.

8. Finally, remember to charge green. It's easy to plug in a battery charger, walk away and forget it. But all the while that little bugger is going to draw phantom power from your outlet, even when it's not charging batteries. Put the charger on a switchable power outlet, or simply pull the plug when not in use.

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