

Coming Wednesday: This year's Easter egg hunt options include thousands of eggs being dropped from helicopters and the chance to try out a new playground post-hunt. Page 1D.



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Spring cleaning: Finding new uses for old things

By Amanda Kwan
Associated Press Writer

Springtime is here again, and with it the annual tradition of cleaning house. But that doesn't have to mean bag after bag of garbage.

Given fears of a recession and worries about overflowing landfills, there's new incentive to find second lives for many household items.

"We can't afford to keep living disposable lives," said Lori Baird, a co-author of "Don't Throw It Out: Recycle and Reuse to Make Things Last," a compendium from Yankee magazine.

"It makes sense for all of us to be more careful about how we spend money."

Some of Baird's favorite tips include using the wire racks from an old refrigerator as cooking racks for baked goods, and donating old towels to animal shelters, which use them for dog baths.

But not everything can be salvaged. Baird warns against reusing items such as children's car seats, which have expiration dates because of frequent changes in safety features. "If there's ever a question of safety involved in reusing an object, I'd say don't do it," Baird said in an e-mail.

For everything else, repurposing often requires a little washing up and a touch of imagination.

The next time you're contemplating giving something the old heave-ho, here are 15 tips to give it new use:

1. OLD DISHES, NEW PLANTER Filling a large outdoor planter with soil for a small plant can be costly. Pieces of a broken clay pot or ceramic dish help drainage and prop up undersized plants. Place shards at the bottom of a large pot until almost half the pot is full. Add a layer of plastic foam pieces or a mixture of gravel or pebbles (you can also use filler from old aquariums or wine corks), and then fill with potting soil.

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Do you know where your children are? Check their many new virtual worlds

By Hillary Rhodes
Associated Press Writer

Once upon a time, Tinkerbell was known as the magical fairy who helped children fly. Now Disney is summoning the mischievous little sprite from Peter Pan to get kids to go online.

In a new virtual world called Disney Fairies Pixie Hollow, girls and boys can become a fairy, dress up, fly around, befriend other fairies and help paint lady bugs, teach baby birds to fly or go on other nature-related quests. It's packaged as the world of Tinkerbell and her friends, and their work is to make nature happen.

More children's toys are incorporating an online component, extending the world of imagination from sand boxes and toy boxes to the computer screen, blurring the distinction on the way.

Seeing the success of Webkinz, big-name companies and unheard-of startups alike are tapping into their own imaginations to try to develop unique interactive sites for kids. It's a tight race to produce the most compelling place for the already over-scheduled kids they're trying to attract.

And for parents, the games can present new challenges

How parents can monitor mouse time

The Associated Press

Growing up with a keyboard at your fingertips is a relatively new concept, and there still seem to be more questions than answers about how much of an impact — good or bad — online time will have on children's development.

But some experts say you can work to help them build a safer and smarter relationship with the computer.

KEEP PERSPECTIVE: Spend more time with real-life friends than virtual friends, says the president of Web Wise Kids, a nonprofit in Santa Ana, Calif. "Kids should be having both experiences," Judi Westberg Warren says. "They should be able to be online for a limited period of time, but also should be involved in real-life relationships and real-life activities."

STRATEGIC PLACEMENT: Keep the computer in a public space, Westberg Warren says. It shouldn't be in the kid's room, where he is free to be online without supervision.

BE INVOLVED: Parents should get to know the programs their kids are using, according to Westberg Warren. It's no good letting your child loose into a virtual world that you don't know how to navigate yourself.

Participating can also be a good way to do an activity alongside your kid, instead of letting the computer be a divisive force in your relationship.

CONTENT MATTERS: "The message is the message," when it comes to weighing the value of various Web sites and computer programs, says Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, director of the National Center for Children & Families at New York's Columbia University. Parents should pay attention to what kind of content their children are viewing when exploring virtual worlds.

NOTICE BLATANT ADVERTISING: A lot of sites aimed at kids are trying to sell stuff and introduce brands to children at an early and impressionable time of their lives. Parents should keep an eye out for that kind of campaign, because kids can't always recognize that the virtual world they are playing in is a glorified commercial, Brooks-Gunn says. "There's no reason to increase the consumerism of children in America."

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The Associated Press



Above: Deanna Sellers of Woodstock pours liquefied warm soap into a wooden mold lined with freezer paper to make her line of NuMe All-Natural Soap. Top: A rainbow sampling of her soap. Below: She adds chopped almonds to a batch of honey almond soap.

Cherokee Tribune photos by Amber M. McCloskey

Children's health inspires Woodstock mom to make all-natural soaps

By Donna Harris
Cherokee Tribune Staff Writer

As the mother of two small children, Deanna Sellers is always concerned about their health.

That's why she became alarmed when she learned that 60 percent of whatever was put on their skin — soaps, lotions, powders — would absorb into their bodies.

In January 2007, the Woodstock resident began making her own all-natural soap and turned it into a part-time business.

"I just wanted to provide a healthier lifestyle for my family," said Mrs. Sellers, wife of John Sellers and mother of Dylan, 6, and Abby, 4.

She began researching ways to eliminate chemicals and other unnatural ingredients that were in products they used on their skin and discovered recipes for homemade soaps.

"I always liked the look of it and thought it was pretty and smelled nice so I started experimenting," she said, noting people can "learn to do anything on the Internet." "I went online and got a lot of recipes — there's really only one way to make real soap — and followed the directions. It's really just like cooking."

Her first batch of soap turned out well, and she discovered she liked making it.

"I took to it pretty well, and it was pretty easy for me," she said, noting she tweaks the recipes according to the properties she wants in each batch. "And I had fun doing it."

Besides making the soap for her family, Mrs. Sellers, 39, was also giving it away as gifts to friends and relatives.

"People loved it and wanted to buy it from me to give to their family and friends," she said, noting it also can be used as a shampoo. "Then I thought maybe I should turn it into a business. So in October, I approached my first store, and it kind of took off from there."

The Missouri native now sells 13 kinds of soap — chamomile mosaic, eucalyptus mint, honey almond, lavender rose, lavender vanilla, lemongrass, oatmeal complexion, orange ginger, patchouli oat, peppermint, rosemary eucalyptus, simply soap unscented and spiced orange — in four local stores for \$6 a bar.

To make it, she combines four different oils — palm oil for hardening the bars, soy and olive oil for moisturizing and coconut oil for lather —



All about the soap and the soapmaker

NuMe All-Natural Soap
Cost: \$6 a bar
Available at: One Queen's Folly, 460 Chambers St., Suite B-6, Woodstock; The Paisley Farmhouse, 980 Birmingham Road, Suite 606, Milton; Elegant Attic, 1105 Canton St., Roswell; and The Garden Within, 765 Mid Broadwell Road, Alpharetta; coming soon to The Humble Candle, 44 Public Square, Dahlonega
Other products: Bath and Body Oil (\$10), Whipped Shea Body Butter (\$14) and Aloe Body Mist (\$8)
Info: (770) 366-0793; deanna@numenaturalssoap.com

About the soapmaker
Name: Deanna Sellers
Age: 39
Residence: Woodstock (since 2001)
Native of: East Prairie, Mo.
Occupation: Full-time mom, maker of NuMe All-Natural Soap
Family: Husband, John; son, Dylan, 6; daughter, Abby, 4
Church: North Point Community Church

heats them and adds lye, which is "very dangerous," after the oils cool to the right temperature.

The final ingredients are shea butter as an extra moisturizer; the essential oils and herbs, which give the bars their fragrance; and mineral pigment for coloring.

"At first, I started with fragrance oils, but they have artificial ingredients," she said, noting choosing what scents to create is the hardest part of the process. "I wanted totally 100 percent natural so I switched to essential oils."

Some of the ingredients, like the citrus granules she uses in the lemongrass and the vanilla in the lavender vanilla, add the color to the soap.

Once everything is mixed, she pours the liquid into a long wooden mold lined with freezer paper and lets it harden for a day. In her office/workroom, she takes the "big loaf of soap" out of the mold, puts it in a miter box and cuts 22 1-inch bars with a wide putty knife.

She lets the bars dry for a while then stamps a butterfly, which she chose partly because of her faith, on each one.

"The butterfly symbolizes new life," she said. "It's everything new. I'm rejuvenating and renewing somebody (with her soaps)."

She stores the bars in cardboard boxes to keep the scent strong, but she sells them unwrapped so people can "pick it up and smell it and see it," she said.

Mrs. Sellers said she most enjoys the smell of the soaps that she makes.

"My house always smells really good when I'm making soap," she said, noting she makes a batch every couple of weeks, except at Christmas, when she was making it every day. "I like being able to use it myself and having something I know is healthy for my family to use. And I always have a gift available for someone. Everyone love soap — well, maybe not men, but my husband loves it."

Since October, she's had to restock the stores that are selling it "quite a few times," she said.

"I haven't had to put a whole lot of effort into it," she said, noting each store usually buys about six bars at a time. "With the stores I'm in, I just took my soaps to them, and they bought them. Now I'm seeing repeat orders. The true test is when you get repeat orders."

But she got a phone call last week from a shop owner in Dahlonega who wanted to sell her soaps.

"The more the word gets out there, the more people will want to carry it."

Mrs. Sellers said she also sold her products at a Christmas craft bazaar for a local neighborhood and would like to do more festivals and craft shows.

"I thought I'd probably see a couple of bars, but I sold a lot of soap," she said. "That's something I want to do more of, but I'll have to have a lot of soap. There are a lot of events in the spring so I need to start preparing for that."

Though she actually makes the soap, she considers it a family business because she "couldn't do it without my husband," she said.

"He's been very supportive in helping me get started and helping me with the kids, especially around the holidays when I was so busy," she said. "I never could do it on my own."

She also credits God for "giving me this gift," and she wants to honor him by using her skills to benefit other people.

"I have a charity I help out (Bethany Place in Macedonia), and hopefully, my business will grow so I can help more," she said.

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