

Rebuilding a Safer Planet

Shane Shirley is on a mission to rid homes of everyday toxic chemicals and waste.

By Kevin Fritz

In the Oscar-winning movie *Shane*, Alan Ladd plays a Wyoming gunslinger, who saves the day by sticking up for what is right in the late 1800s. Here in Florida, 100-plus years later, another Shane — **Shane Shirley of Windermere** — uses social media, lobbying and networking as her weapons of choice, fighting a modern-day battle of right and wrong.

Logging countless volunteer hours, Shirley is out to protect families and children from dangerous chemicals and waste that have become a part of everyday life, blogging for a number of green organizations promoting sustainability and healthier living. As a distributor of canvas totes, she is a major advocate for replacing plastic bags, as well as reducing the number of plastic bottles choking our landfills. Last year, looking to get more involved offline and locally, she discovered FemCity Orlando, the venerable networking group of professional women representing a number of area industries and disciplines to help spread her message and learn from others.

Two years ago, Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families, a national coalition of more than 11 million people, recognized Shirley's blogging prowess, and she soon became the group's volunteer blogging partner for Florida.

Lindsay Dahl, deputy director, Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families, says Shirley's enthusiasm



From left to right, Alexandra 14, Reece-Callie 17, Shane, Hayden-Jay 8, and Ace.

COURTESY OF SHANE SHIRLEY

inspires people to get involved, to make a difference and to join the movement. “Our grassroots base has grown because of the tireless, passionate dedication Shane has shown to the cause of protecting our families from toxic chemicals,” says Dahl.

Shirley also travels to Washington, D.C. when necessary, to lobby for changes to archaic toxic chemical laws, all for the greater good. The task at hand for Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families is amending the outdated Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) of 1976.

Shirley believes dangerous chemicals are too present in today's everyday life, from the lining in cereal boxes to the lathering agent in shampoos. “I don't want my daughters to have infertility issues or get cancer,” she says. “It's not just genetic or hereditary. It's from the things we touch, the things we use every day.”

According to a paper published in the neurobiology journal *Lancet*

last month, the number of industrial chemicals, heavy metals and pesticides that have been documented as capable of derailing normal brain development has doubled over the past several years. “These chemicals do not belong in our homes or in our products,” says Shirley, “and consumers have a right to have safe products.”

Shirley says retailer involvement is key to ridding dangerous chemicals from the supply chain, and she praises Target for its proactive Chemicals of Concern scorecard that its buyers refer to when dealing with suppliers.

Indeed, today's retailers are listening to the rise in consumer support of healthy initiatives and advocates like Shirley, which is evident by Target's scorecard and CVS opting to no longer sell cigarettes.

The trend has just begun. **L**

To learn more about possible harmful chemicals in products, visit www.centralfloralifestyle.com