



# Conscious Consuming

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **'CONSCIOUS CONSUMING' LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S "U.S. NATIONAL DOWNSHIFTING WEEK" FROM JULY 7-13TH**

Americans will soon be celebrating National Downshifting Week, a voluntary simplicity awareness campaign sponsored by the non-profit Conscious Consuming. U.S. National Downshifting Week builds on the work of Tracey Smith, the founder of National Downshifting Week in the UK. U.S. National Downshifting week is scheduled for July 7-13, 2007 and is designed to help participants "*Slow Down and Green Up.*"

To *downshift* means to cut out unnecessary expenditure and cultivate a simpler lifestyle (and leave a lighter environmental footprint) with time to do more of the things you want to do. Data from the mid-90's from the Trends Research Institute shows that about 10% of Americans identify with downshifting, voluntary simplicity, and simple living. Duane Elgin, author of several books on voluntary simplicity, calls this a "conservative estimate."

Many Americans are cutting back consumption this year due to higher food, health care, and fuel prices. According to Nan Mooney, author of *(Not) Keeping Up with Our Parents*, "The share of family income devoted to "fixed costs" like housing, child care, health insurance, and taxes has climbed from 53 percent to 75 percent in the past two decades, " while real median incomes are lower than they were in 2003. The freefall in the housing market has also been a factor in reducing consumption, as home equity credit tightens and people feel the crunch. The recession cloud has a silver lining, however; according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, our personal savings rate over the past year has inched out of negative territory and currently hovers between 0.5- 0.7%.

Instead of feeling down about buying less stuff, many Americans celebrate their decision to downshift. Smith says, "A positive approach to living with less helps you re-think ways to enjoy time with your loved ones *without* reaching for your wallet; changes to your spending habits should happen because you *want* them to."

Donohoe notes that the dates for National Downshifting Week (July 7-13<sup>th</sup>) were chosen to coincide with the birthday of America's most famous downshifter, Henry David Thoreau (born July 12, 1817). "Modern downshiffters don't have to move into a cabin in the woods to simplify their lives. Happiness depends on knowing when you have enough, and finding ways to do the things you love to do without spending a ton of money," says Donohoe. "Downshiffters can live deliberately, leave a lighter footprint on the earth, and have even more time with their families and friends."

For further details see [www.downshiftingweek.com](http://www.downshiftingweek.com) and [www.consciousconsuming.org](http://www.consciousconsuming.org)

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