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## Grist keeps on growing and green

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Granola and yogurt. Could they be so wrong?

Sort of, when consumed in the company of Chip Giller. He once carried a week's worth of his own trash to classes at Brown University to illustrate college-student wastefulness. "Sorry," I muttered to Giller, as I cracked open one plastic container, then another, and picked up a plastic spoon. Felt like I had just set fire to a pile of tires.



Chip Giller, founder of the online magazine Grist.org

"It's all right," Giller said. As the president of Grist.org, an online environmental magazine, he's used to seeing people do simple, American things like making trash, buying new and missing the connection between the things we do today and a potentially toxic future.

The Seattle-based Grist is making big strides in trying to change all that. The magazine boasts some 600,000 readers a month, nationally — more than triple the number reading two years ago.

That growth has not gone unnoticed. Politicians such as U.S. Sen. Barack Obama stop by when they come to town. Obama, D-Ill., met with Giller last month in a swing through Seattle to explain his environmental platform.

What's more, Giller is featured in an upcoming Vanity Fair magazine as a rising star in the world of online environmentalism.

He joins Laurie David, an environmentalist who has produced three films on global warming; Graham Hill, founder of Treehugger.com magazine; and Heather Stephenson and Jennifer Boulden, creators of IdealBite.com, which offers subscribers tips on how to live an eco-friendly life.

"They put me in a transparent, \$200 Banana Republic T-shirt with a coat on top," Giller said, sipping peppermint tea near his Pioneer Square office one recent morning. "It

is a world I haven't encountered before.

"But I think it's a wonderful thing that they are doing an edition on the environment."

The issue will undoubtedly do things for Giller, as well, and he knows that. But if it takes wearing a \$200 T-shirt to get people to talk about the environment, well, he's willing. "It's not the Cult of Chip that we're trying to create," Giller said. "It's a new face of the environmental movement. It's a turning point, overall."

What's different about Grist is its quest to bring environmentalism to the masses. No more preaching to the familiar field of greenies; Grist attaches the environment to other mainstream issues such as national security, the economy and poverty. Example: the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

"They're the first climate refugees the country has seen," Giller said.

And yet, Grist doesn't want to be all gloom and doom, but more to the environment what Jon Stewart and "The Daily Show" are to politics: smart, funny, relevant.

It doesn't hurt that the magazine holds forth in a city that is making its own national gestures toward saving the planet. Last year, Mayor Greg Nickels asked his fellow mayors to help him follow the Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by 7 percent below 1990 levels. So far, 220 mayors have signed up.

And last year, City Light announced it had reduced its net greenhouse-gas emissions to zero, thanks to moves such as switching its vehicle fleet to biodiesel.

"This is a city that has played a role in the dot-com revolution and it's a city of new energies, new approaches," Giller said. "We're a lot closer to the natural environment here. On the East Coast, they're trying to reclaim something that's lost. We have the Puget Sound outside our window."

In other words, we're reminded every day What's at Stake. Giller grew up in Lexington, Mass. He founded Grist in 1999, hoping to "lighten up a movement that takes itself too seriously." He had already written for High Country News; founded Greenwire, the first environmental news daily; and served as the new media director for the Earth Day Network under Earth Day co-founder Denis Hayes.

Giller commutes to Pioneer Square from Vashon Island,

where he and his wife are expecting their first child.

Giller relishes the marriage between journalism and the environment.

The key to Grist's growth is "more reader engagement," he said, which is why the magazine includes an advice column.

Giller's favorite question so far: "Can you recycle a beer bottle when it has a lime wedge in it?"

Yes, Giller said.

As for my yogurt and granola cups and all that plastic? Giller offered to do the deed, he's carried garbage before, so he offered to toss them properly.

**Nicole Brodeur's column appears Wednesday and Sunday. Reach her at 206-464-2334 or nbrodeur@seattletimes.com. She's buying lots of Tupperware.**

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