

T started as a simple change to try and reduce the amount of waste being sent to landfill.

Now the Ghent family are living the good life in a bid to reduce their carbon footprint and do their bit for the environment.

In a scene reminiscent of the 1970s BBC comedy *The Good Life*, Simon and Alethea Ghent grow a variety of vegetables at their Loughborough home and have five chickens living in their small back garden which produce eggs for them and their three children - Josh (12), Isaac (10) and eight-year-old Yasmin.

But this is no laughing matter as the whole family have taken on



MAKING A DIFFERENCE:

Simon and Alethea Ghent (back row) with their children Josh, Isaac and Yasmin. Below: Isaac helps with the recycling by filling the Green Johanna.

Ghents are inspiration to others

THE Ghent family are an inspiration to others and show how little changes can make a big difference.

Charnwood Borough Council's Waste Education Officer, Vicky Brackenbury, added: "For a family of five to produce as minimal amount of landfill waste as they do is remarkable and a very impressive achievement.

"They really are a phenomenal example of how implementing small changes can make a huge difference.

"I have nothing but praise and hope that other people may be encouraged to follow suit."

Tolu Omideyi, Charnwood's Sustainable Development Officer, said: "What is remarkable is that the Ghent's energy, transport and financial savings have been achieved even though they have shifted to operating their business from home.

"The Ghent's are successfully reducing their carbon footprint and reaping the benefits of sustainable living."

To find out more about reducing your carbon footprint, log on to www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/sustainableliving

For tips on reducing the amount of waste that goes to landfill, visit www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/waste_minimisation_education

The good life!

board the sustainable living philosophy - and it has led to a healthier lifestyle and helped reduce energy costs.

And this all started as a result of Charnwood Borough Council introducing fortnightly collections.

Simon said: "We were one of the ones that were not happy about the collections being reduced to fortnightly as we wondered what we were going to do with everything.

"But we started an environmental consultancy and it was a case of practicing what we preached really.

"The first step was getting a normal compost bin and that reduced our waste by 20 per cent. Then it was a case of recycling everything we could."

This led to the family looking at ways to reduce their energy usage - and they have achieved that despite working from home.

They saved a staggering 2,466 kilo Watt Hours in 2008

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- Alethea Ghent

compared with the previous year leading to a big reduction in their energy bills.

"We worked out that keeping the clock on the oven permanently switched on was costing us about £8 a year," said Alethea. "We then stopped leaving things like the microwave and television on standby.

"With working at home, you would have expected the electricity bills to go up but we managed to reduce it last year by 28 per cent, which saved us about £350, and

that's just by switching things off."

The Ghents have also started using public transport and bikes more and now only have one family car instead of two - meaning they are doing 15,000 miles less a year!

Simon added: "It is possible to reduce waste with just a little bit of effort. It does take an adjustment but it is possible.

"Now we are producing about half a normal bin bag of landfill waste once a fortnight - and we're aiming to get that down to just a carrier bag full!"

"We are not green-fingered, we did not have a clue about growing vegetables. But it's so easy.

"Just adjusting our lifestyle has made a difference to the whole family and things are so much better all round!"

