

### 3-30-12 The Terra-ble Truth about Trash

It's time for spring cleaning and the truth is in the trash. It's spring time alright. Down by the street there are bottles and packages, tossed out of passing cars. I hate the looks of it and I can't understand how some people can do that without a bothered conscience. I am only thankful for a memory it elicits. When my children were young I discovered what looked like a bottle dump, except that these weren't old and they were mostly "nip" bottles. My children confessed that I had stumbled upon their laboratory. They wanted to see what would grow in various mediums such as dirt, water or moss. My sister's boy began to plead with jealousy that he wanted a lab, too! Don't you just love children's creative and sometimes competitive spirit?

In a similar spirit, some people are making money by making creative recycling their business. One such company is TerraCycle based in Trenton, New Jersey. It was founded by the worm poop guy. You know of him, right? I remember the story being in the news but did not realize he has grown from homemade fertilizer to fantastic recycling partnerships all over the world. According to their website, "Founded in 2001 by Tom Szaky, then a 20-year-old Princeton University freshman, TerraCycle began by producing organic fertilizer, packaging liquid worm poop in used soda bottles. Since then TerraCycle has grown into one of the fastest-growing green companies in the world."

TerraCycling was recently brought to my attention by Kevin Rogers. Kevin works at the Franklin Park Zoo (among other cool places), where they receive some much-needed funds for collecting items usually considered trash. Candy bags, bread bags, cookie packages, cosmetic containers, tooth brushes, floss containers, pens and highlighters are among the items currently being collected. Kevin hopes to expand the benefits by finding locations allowing him to place collection boxes. He would also like to have some attractive containers built by partnering with the schools' vocational classes. I suggested a scout might be interested in the idea for an Eagle Scout project.

\*\*\*For right now, the project has begun at the Halifax Recycling Center, with drop-offs of potato chip bags, cookie packages and candy bar wrappers. \*\*\*(They ask that you please not place these items in your roadside pick-up, but bring them to the Recycling Center.)

Some years ago the third graders at Halifax Elementary School began collecting paper with an Abitibi container at the side of the school and the collection is still growing strong. Even though the Town of Halifax offers recycling, people like the convenience of the additional collection location, where they can toss in the paper any time on any day.

When our stuff is thrown away it ends up in a landfill. Now, that's a really backward way to run a country and care for the planet. We are spending money to build lined and permitted landfills until the hole in the ground is full and then we spend more on capping that landfill with an engineered and permitted design for that closing. And then we dig another big

hole and proceed to fill that one, too. That's our tax money. We worked to earn it and then, instead of saving it, we throw some away!

Plympton does not have roadside trash pick-up. We have a transfer station. We bring our trash there, where people are paid to oversee the crushing, sweeping up and seeing that it is picked up for hauling to a landfill. Trucks, truck drivers, gasoline, and all the administrative overhead costs that go with any business all go into hauling away our trash. Can you imagine how costly that is? Check out your town's budget for that and think about it the next time you throw something away that could be taken out of that costly equation by recycling it. The trash bins would be open for receiving for a longer time, thus reducing the pick-up costs. Recycling would go up, bringing in money for the town.

The Halifax town hall has been collecting bottle caps for a few years now, all because of one little boy whose class was participating in a recycling program. The boy wanted to collect more than anyone else and he did, with the help of a bunch of women collecting caps all year long. What began as a fun project to help one enthusiastic boy has become a routine practice. It would feel odd now to not remove the cap, thus lowering the value of the bottle, for they are made out of different plastics.

Reduce-Reuse-Recycle. We need to pay more attention to the first two and then, when we no longer can find a use for something, it's nice to know that we have more options for recycling than what is offered by our town programs. It's important to reduce our waste of money and our waste of the earth, too. "Terra" is Latin for "earth". You can join in celebrating the care of our terra firma on April 22, this year's Earth Day by following the example set by the third graders collecting paper and the little boy collecting bottle caps and Kevin helping Franklin Park Zoo via TerraCycle. Let the savings begin!

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