

A Quarterly Newsletter of



**Spokane Regional
Solid Waste System**

(509) 625-6580
www.solidwaste.org

Winter 2010



Poster Contest Entries Show the Many Ways to “Go Green”

“Go Green” was the theme of 2009’s America Recycles poster contest, and 340 students from 32 schools and organizations throughout Spokane County responded with multi-colored entries. Their efforts illustrated their understanding of how making “green” behaviors, such as recycling, reusing and reducing, a part of our everyday lives can create a healthy, sustainable environment.

It was truly difficult to choose finalists from the many inspired submissions, and all participants deserve congratulations for their works of art. The 2009 finalists are:

Assumption Catholic School, Spokane – Jessie Mack, Grade 4

Betz Elementary, Cheney – Mira Pederson, Grade 3

Browne Camp Fire, Spokane – Amanda Fitch, Grade 5

Continuous Curriculum School, Otis Orchards – Kalei Meyer, Grade 7

Five Mile Prairie, Mead – Crystal Osborne, Grade 8

Hallett Elementary, Medical Lake – Jeremy Ryan, Grade 6

Hamblen Elementary, Spokane – Bryn Van Mansum, Grade 2

Logan Elementary, Spokane – Jharen Pangelinan, Grade 5; Breanna Witter, Grade 5; Nouci Yang, Grade 5; Misha Zhuikov, Grade 5

Medical Lake Middle School, Medical Lake – Molly Ryan, Grade 8

Orchard Center Elementary, Millwood – Riley Hughes, Grade 4; Danielle Mann, Grade 2; Renee Palmer, Grade 4; Frankie Schade, Grade 3; David Yevdash, Grade 5

Pioneer School, Spokane Valley – Isabelle Busch, Grade 2; Hannah Craig, Grade 4; Becca LaSeur, Grade 3; Erika Sankovich, Grade 3; Henry Schmick, Grade 3; Aditya Varadan, Grade 3-4

Salnave Elementary, Cheney – Miranda Jones, Grade 3

St. Charles Catholic School, Spokane – Rachel Dolle, Grade 8; Alexandra Logan, Grade 8; Kegley Schuh, Grade 7

Recycle Man, mascot for the Spokane Indians Baseball Club, paid a surprise visit to the celebration held on Nov. 3, 2009, for the finalists of the America Recycles poster contest.



St. John Vianney Catholic School, Spokane Valley – Connor Gilbert, Grade 6

St. Mary’s Catholic School, Spokane Valley – Bryce Dumais, Grade 8; Wendy Gregory, Grade 8; Christopher Walsh, Grade 4; Phaydra Williamson, Grade 3

The finalists’ entries were displayed at River Park Square in downtown Spokane. Additional

judging selected 18 posters from this group for the 2010 “Spokane Recycles” calendar. The America Recycles poster contest was sponsored by the Spokane Regional Solid Waste System (SRSWS) with partial funding from a Washington Department of Ecology grant. Calendars are available by calling the Recycling Hot Line, 625-6800.

The Question of Glass

As a conscientious recycler, you put your glass jars and bottles in your blue recycling bin each week so that your hauler can take them away, or maybe you take them to a recycling center yourself. But then what? Is it worth the effort to collect glass for recycling? That’s the question that recycling managers across the country are asking.

Used glass is a particularly difficult material to handle in an environmentally responsible manner. In Eastern Washington, markets for it are few and distant, which means higher transportation costs are incurred, as well as the use of fuel that contributes to carbon emissions pollution.

Landfilling glass is an option, but also involves transportation to remote locations. Locally, Spokane County can include it in the trash that is incinerated at the Waste to Energy Plant, but glass doesn’t burn; instead, it actually uses energy as it melts. And the resulting debris still needs to be disposed of at a landfill.

Recycling glass can cause contamination in other materials that are recycled, particularly paper fiber. Even a very small amount of glass (as grit or shards) lowers the quality of recycled paper products and can cause severe damage to paper mill equipment.

All of these factors are why Spokane Regional Solid Waste System (SRSWS) is motivated to find other uses for the massive amount of glass that is collected from recycling bins and centers each year (nearly 6,000 tons in 2008). One viable option may result from a recent pilot project: the use of crushed glass as part of the Market Street roadbed that was reconstructed during the summer of 2009. SRSWS partnered with the City of Spokane’s Streets, Solid Waste Management, and Engineering Services departments, as well as Pacific Steel and Recycling; Spokane Recycling Products, Inc.; S.A. Gonzales Construction, Inc.; and Inland Asphalt for the pilot.



Glass containers are fed into the hopper of a crusher that will prepare the material to be mixed with crushed rock as an aggregate to be used in roadbeds.

By combining 1,500 tons of crushed glass with crushed rock, an aggregate was created which was used to make a 9-inch-thick roadbed. Inland Asphalt construction crews then put down an 8-inch layer of asphalt to complete the 1.25-mile surface.

“The pilot project is now being evaluated,” said Rich Hanson, senior engineer for the City of Spokane’s Solid Waste Management department. “It’s a good process and we’ve had good feedback from everybody. Preliminary tests have been positive and we hope to be able to use it again this next construction season.”

SRSWS continues to seek additional uses for glass that can help reduce costs and environmental impacts. By identifying and employing more of these kinds of local projects, we can reduce transportation distances and the use of landfills, increase local preparation and use, and make glass a truly recyclable and reusable material.

Doing the Right Thing

Confused about what to put in your blue curbside recycling bin? Questions about whether you can put in a pizza box or if you should remove labels from cans and bottles? Scratching your head over what kinds of plastics are accepted? You’re not alone.

The Spokane Regional Solid Waste System (SRSWS) knows you want to do it right—that’s why you see “The Cycle Starts With You” ads in so many local publications. These messages are designed to give you brief reminders of what recyclable materials are appropriate to include and how to prepare them when you set out your blue bin for weekly pickup. If you do happen to put in an unacceptable item, your hauler should leave you an “Oops!” tag that will note why he couldn’t take it.

As recycling technology evolves, SRSWS will be able to add more types of recyclable ma-

terials to the list of what goes “in the bin.” When we do, we’ll make sure you are aware of the new information through advertising and articles in the local media.

Recycling is still one of the best and easiest things we can do to make Spokane and the planet a better place to live. If you have questions about what you can and can’t place in your blue curbside bin, or if you’d like to find out how to get a bin, call the Recycling Hot Line, 625-6800. You can also check the Recycling & Garbage Guide in the front of your Dex phone book for other places to take your recyclables.



The Safer Way: Guidelines to Disposing of Unwanted Household Medicines

In the past, consumers were often told to flush their unneeded medicines, both prescription and over-the-counter, down the toilet or drain. Now that it has become apparent that this practice adds to pollution in our local waterways, alternative solutions have been created by organizations and agencies concerned about drug abuse, accidental poisonings and environmental contamination.

The best and safest method to dispose of unwanted medicines is to use a community drug take-back program. The Medicine Return Program has 37 locations in six counties in Washington, including four locations in Spokane County. By disposing of your medicines at one of these locations, you prevent them from being consumed accidentally, being stolen from the garbage, or polluting our environment. For locations and types of items accepted, go to www.medicinereturn.com.

If a collection program is not available or convenient for you, mix medicines with an undesirable substance, such as cat litter or used coffee grounds. Conceal or remove any personal information and place the sealed container in your trash, making sure that it cannot be retrieved by children, animals, or those who may be looking for drugs.

You can also bring your unwanted medicines to the Household Hazardous Waste areas of the recycling centers at the Waste to Energy Facility, the North County Transfer Station or the Valley Transfer Station where they will be disposed of appropriately.



No Impact Man

Colin Beavan had written two books of history when he decided he'd like to write about the environment. But rather than a how-to book, he chose a lifestyle experiment. He set out to answer the question, "Could I, at least for one year, live my life doing more good than harm?" So he, his wife, their baby daughter, and the family dog began their "No Impact" year with the goal of creating as little negative environmental impact as possible. Garbage was the first thing to go, followed by automated transportation, non-local food, new products, and, eventually, most electricity.

Throughout the year, Beavan wrote a blog following the ups and downs of the family's experiment, from giving up shopping to living without elevators (the family lives on the ninth floor of a New York City apartment building). Beavan and his wife, Michelle Conlin, found unexpected pleasure in giving up TV for more reading, outings in the city, and family time with little Isabella. However, trying to do laundry without using the automatic washing machine was a less welcome change. After finishing the No Impact year, the family kept many of the new habits. For instance, they have continued to frequent the farmers market to purchase in-season, regionally-grown foods, and they still use their bikes for much of their transportation. Other habits they have given up. They did switch the electricity back on, but they waste less of it today.

During the project, Beavan struggled to find a way to get what he and his family needed in the most sustainable way possible. Throughout, he continued to ask how he could make a difference. In the book, *No Impact Man*, which records the family's experiment in low-impact living, Beavan concludes, "The job is simply this: to live our lives as though we make a difference. Because, paradoxically, when we imagine we don't make a difference, that is when we do the most harm." In the end, he found that perhaps he had been asking the wrong question. The question is not, is he the type of person who can make a difference, but rather, "whether I'm the type of person who wants to try."

The family's year is also the subject of a

documentary film, also titled *No Impact Man*, which was released in the fall.

Learn more about the project at www.noimpactman.com.



Photos courtesy of Oscilloscope Laboratories

Conscious Consumption

No Impact Man's experiment was a bit extreme. However, learning to be a more conscious consumer can be good for your family, your bank account, and our economy. Colin Beavan's wife, Michelle Conlin, who is a writer and editor at *BusinessWeek*, recently wrote in the magazine's blog, *The Case for Optimism*: "So much talk of sustainability hinges on being less bad. Less plastic. Less packaging. Less resource use. But less bad isn't the answer. The true value comes from delivering more good."

Conscious consumption is about this process of creating "more good." For you, it might be about mak-

ing things with your own hands or moving yourself from place to place with your own human-powered legs. It might be about enjoying the beauty and craft that have gone into creating a lovely and well-designed object. It might be about recycling and reusing more of what you need and use. It might be about understanding how things are made and where the resources originated that are needed to make them. It might be about finding quiet and enjoying the company of the people you love.

For more information, visit www.newdream.org/consumption/.

Plenty of projects with "plarn"

RecycleCindy, owner of My Recycled Bags, creates bags and many other clever items from "plarn," which is yarn made from plastic. The plastic comes from old grocery bags, bread wrappers, cassette tapes, and VHS videotapes. She sometimes uses scrap fabric from denim, bed sheets, and rags, as well. Whatever the material, Cindy crochets clever purses, shoulder bags, totes, and water bottle holders. She also makes dishcloths, pot handle covers, and a variety of other items. She sells many of these items through her website. Each item is one of a kind.

Not content to crochet only her own plarn, RecycleCindy also posts patterns and instructions so that her readers can learn to make their own bags, doll clothes, baby bibs, and much more. Her website includes a step-by-step guide for making your own plarn.

To learn more about making your own plarn creations (or to buy one of RecycleCindy's), visit www.myrecycledbags.com.



A Care Tag for Our Planet

Proper care can extend the life of everything from your refrigerator to your favorite pair of jeans. That's why Goodwill has teamed up with Levi Strauss & Co. on an initiative to promote longer use and more reuse of jeans. The program, A Care Tag for Our Planet, offers consumers instructions for washing less frequently in cold water and line drying to keep the jeans looking and feeling great longer. When the items are no longer wanted, the tag reminds consumers not to throw away the jeans but to donate them to Goodwill for reuse by another consumer.

Washing clothes only when they are dirty and using proper temperature settings and mild detergents will help your clothes last longer. A commitment to reuse by selling or donating unneeded clothes can dramatically reduce the amount of clothing waste headed to landfills. Textile waste, including clothing and other fabric items, tops 12 million tons each year in the U.S. Of this, only about 15% is being recycled.



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Recycling holds steady

Did you know?

Every ton of mixed paper recycled can save the energy equivalent of 185 gallons of gasoline.

Recycling just 1 ton of aluminum cans conserves the equivalent of 1,665 gallons of gasoline.

By recycling and composting 83 million tons of municipal solid waste, we reduced carbon dioxide emissions by an amount equivalent to removing more than 33 million cars from the road, and we saved an amount of energy equivalent to 10.2 billion gallons of gasoline.

Source: *Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States: Facts and Figures for 2008*

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently released its annual report, "Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States," for 2008. Not surprisingly, as the economy slid into recession last year, the total volume of waste generated declined, coming in at just under 250 million tons. This was the first significant decline in nearly 50 years.

Per capita waste generation, or the average amount of waste created per person per day, fell to 4.5 pounds. Per capita generation had already been on the decline before the recession, but fell more substantially in 2008. The pre-2008 decline had been credited to waste reduction and reuse activities, but the 2008 change can most likely be linked to the recession. The per capita waste generation rate has not been this low since 1990.

At the same time, recycling held steady as a percentage of total waste generation, with 33.2% of all waste either recycled or composted. Since 1980, the percentage of waste landfilled has dropped from 89% to just over 54%.

National recycling rates by material were also included in the report. Auto batteries continue to top the list with a recycling rate of 99.2%, followed by office-type papers at 70.9%, yard trimmings at 64.7%, steel cans at 62.8%, and aluminum beverage cans at 48.2%. Other containers, including glass and plastic bottles, jugs, and jars, were recycled at a rate of about 27 to 29%.

The EPA has been collecting and reporting on solid waste annually for more than 30 years. To see the 2008 report, visit www.epa.gov/epawaste/nonhaz/municipal/msw99.htm.

fast facts

Here's an "app" for you!

Earth911.com has launched a new app for iPhone users. iRecycle is a free mobile version featuring Earth911's helpful information and designed to assist users in finding recycling and event information on the go. To learn more, visit <http://earth911.com/products-overview/iphone/>.

If you are out and need information, but you don't have the app, call 1-800-CLEANUP to reach Earth911. You can also use your smart phone or PDA to access the website, www.Earth911.com.

Earth911 provides useful background information on reducing, reusing, and recycling and maintains a database featuring more than 100,000 recycling locations around the country.



Keep it or toss it?

How many times have you stood at the refrigerator asking yourself this question? Now, an easy-to-use website has answers for you. Whether you are wondering how long you can keep opened cheese, if the milk is still good, or what to do with the crisper full of veggies that you really meant to eat, this is the website for you! You'll find it particularly helpful when you face the dreaded condiment shelf in your fridge. Learn more at www.stilltasty.com.



Hitting the right notes

So you are a music lover? And you also want to take good care of the planet? Easy. Download music and put it directly onto your computer and portable music player, such as an iPod, MP3 player, or Zune. A recent study compared the energy use and greenhouse gas emissions of buying CDs at the store or from an online retailer, downloading music and burning it onto CDs at home, and downloading for digital use on the computer and portable player. Not surprisingly, the digital download had the lowest energy use and emissions, as well as the least amount of potential waste from packaging.

Recycling on a roll

The average person in the U.S. uses more than 20,805 sheets of toilet paper annually. Unfortunately, recycled-content paper makes up less than 2% of the toilet tissue used each year. Recycled-content tissue products, including toilet paper, paper towels, and facial tissues, are readily available at grocers, pharmacies, and national retail chains. Not only does recycled-content tissue reduce the demand on forests and tree farms, but it also provides an essential market for our recyclable mixed paper. Next time you shop, give recycled-content tissue a try.



QUOTES REQUOTED

I shall walk softly there,
And learn by going where I have to go.
Theodore Roethke, 1908-1963
American poet

WHAT'S UP?

Holiday Trees

If you have not yet disposed of your holiday tree, remember that trees free of ornaments, lights, tinsel and flocking can be disposed of as Clean Green. (Don't forget to remove the stand!)

Fresh-cut holiday trees may be placed in Clean Green yard debris carts for curbside pickup—just call your garbage hauler for more information. Trees may also be dropped off at the Waste to Energy Facility, the North County Transfer

Station or the Valley Transfer Station as Clean Green debris and they will be composted.

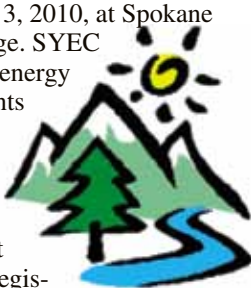
All trees that are discarded, either as Clean Green or with your garbage (or next to the container), must be cut into less than 6' lengths. Please call your garbage hauler first for details as collections, fees and tree preparation requirements may vary. Call the Recycling Hot Line, 625-6800, if you need hauler contact information.



13th Annual SYEC

The next Spokane Youth Environmental Conference (SYEC) will be held on Thursday, June 3, 2010, at Spokane Community College. SYEC is a one-day, high-energy event where students in grades 7-12 can showcase their environmental science projects.

Teachers must complete the pre-registration form, due Friday, Feb. 26, 2010. Students must complete the project abstract form, due Friday, April 23, 2010. All forms are available at the conference website: www.syec.org.



We want your suggestions, questions and comments!

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CONTENT, USING SOY INKS**

Become a Master Composter and Reap the Rewards

If you live in Spokane County and want to learn simple, natural ways to build and retain healthy soil, reduce waste and pollution, as well as make a valuable contribution to your community, the Master Composter Program is what you're looking for!

The Master Composter Program has two components—training and volunteering.

Training

Six sessions, taught by veteran Master Composters and Spokane Regional Solid Waste System staff, will be held this spring. Training will conclude with participation in the Compost Fair at Finch Arboretum's Arbor Day celebration on Saturday, April 24. There is no fee for the training or the written materials provided. Those who complete all class sessions will receive a compost bin.

Here is the class schedule:

- Monday, March 22, 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., WSU/Spokane County Extension, 222 N. Havana – Program overview; materials and benefits of composting; municipal composting
- Saturday, March 27, 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., WSU/Spokane County Extension – Hands-



As part of continuing education for Spokane Master Composters, volunteer Bill Wyche explains what he has learned about processing the manure that his four horses generate.

- on pile building and vermicomposting
- Monday, March 29, 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., WSU/Spokane County Extension – Pile monitoring and compost science

- Monday, April 5, 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., WSU/Spokane County Extension – Pile monitoring, troubleshooting and outreach plans
- Monday, April 12, 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Waste to Energy Facility, 2900 S. Geiger Blvd. – A look at the big picture of Spokane's solid waste (including recycling), with a tour of the Waste to Energy Facility
- Monday, April 19, 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., WSU/Spokane County Extension – Pile monitoring, testing and presentation skills
- Saturday, April 24, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., The Compost Fair/Arbor Day Festival at Finch Arboretum – Work with veteran Master Composters to share information with the public

Volunteering

Individuals who complete the program agree to volunteer at least 40 hours. You'll help others learn more about composting by giving presentations, working in a fair booth, performing computer work, or other tasks that fit your skills. This is in exchange for your training, written materials, and compost bin.

For additional information and registration materials, call the Recycling Hot Line, 625-6800.

Spokane River Gets a Little Cleaner

More than 750 volunteers turned out on Sept. 26, 2009, a bright and sunny fall day, for the seventh annual Spokane River Clean-Up. These dedicated fans of the river collected "junk" from the shores and riverbeds of the High Bridge and University District areas for about two hours, coming back with 11,240 pounds of garbage and 5,207 pounds of recyclable materials—that's over 8 tons of debris that no longer pollute the Spokane River.

The University District, where approximately 175 of the participants helped, was added this year as part of an ongoing effort to expand the area of the Spokane River that benefits from the event.

Music, food, prizes for the most unusual pieces of garbage retrieved, and a visit from the Spokane Indians Baseball Club mascot, Recycle Man, all contributed to the fun and productive day.

"This year's River Clean-Up was the smoothest and most successful yet," said Steve Faust, executive director of Friends of the Falls, a nonprofit organization. "We're grateful for the contributions of the many other community organizations and businesses who join together each year to help us present the clean-up, and for this year's event sponsors: Avista, the Spokane River Stewardship Partners, Wheelabrator Spokane,

Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Alt 29 Design Group, and the Spokesman Review/DTE.

"We also want to thank the City of Spokane for its continued support, and for the many City employees who helped in the planning and as key volunteers on the day of the event. We look forward to working with all of you again next year, and hope you'll mark your calendars for Sept. 25, 2010, the next Spokane River Clean-Up."

Visit www.friendsofthefalls.org for more information about this event and other ways that you can help with preservation of Spokane's historic waterfalls and gorge area.



Young volunteers sort the various recyclable materials that were salvaged during the 2009 Spokane River Clean-Up event. [Photo courtesy of Russ Nobbs]



Spokane Regional
Solid Waste System

WASTE TO ENERGY REPORT CARD

Working Together!



Wheelabrator
Spokane Inc.

July–Sept. 2009

Garbage In

66,070 tons disposed

66,338 tons processed at WTE Facility

2,050 tons of ferrous metal recovered from the ash for recycling

19,306 tons of ash disposed at Rabanco

Electricity Generation

40,151 MWh produced

7,506 MWh used to run the facility

32,027 MWh sold to Puget Sound Energy

Notice of Violation None

Revenues after Electricity Transmission Expenses
\$2,505,793

Exchanges Unite Haves and Have-nots

Reuse networks are not just for old sports gear and small household appliances. Many businesses take part in "materials exchanges" that allow them to post a listing of materials which they "have" or "want." These items might be surplus raw materials, off-spec products, unneeded byproducts, office supplies, shipping cartons, pallets, or partially used containers of chemicals or solvents.

Like Craigslist or Freecycle, these exchanges are information services only. The businesses involved post descriptions of the materials they have available or want. The posting and responding businesses make arrangements by email and/or phone, negotiating price, transportation, and other details.

To learn more about materials exchanges that serve businesses and organizations in your area, contact IMEX, the Industrial Materials Exchange, 1-888-TRY-IMEX, or visit www.govlink.org/hazwaste/business/imex.

You can also post items for sale in classified advertisements in the local newspaper or online through services such as www.Craigslist.com. If you have items that you are willing to give away (or are seeking items for free), visit www.ThrowPlace.com, www.Freecycle.org, or www.gigoit.org.

Spring House Greening Program Ends with Success

Sometimes something is so effective that it eliminates its own purpose. That's what happened to the annual Spring House Greening program, which has now ended. In the past, seniors and the physically challenged were eligible to receive assistance with pick up and disposal of Household Hazardous Waste during this event. In the 10 years of its existence, the program removed a total of 74.15 tons of hazardous materials from the homes of Spokane-area residents.

Sponsored by the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), the Spokane Aquifer Joint Board, the Spokane Regional Health District and the Spokane Regional Solid Waste System, and with assistance from volunteers, neighborhood councils, C.O.P.S. and S.C.O.P.E., Spring House Greening was highly successful.

"The need for the program has gone down and down and down the last few years," said Adam Borgman, volunteer coordinator for RSVP. "It has achieved its goal of removing hazardous waste from the homes of people who were not able to take care of it themselves."

Household Hazardous Waste includes

materials such as old batteries, lawn and garden products, oil-based paint, varnish, motor oil, cleaning solvents, poisons and other chemicals. If these products are not disposed of properly, they can be harmful to one's health and cause serious damage to the environment.

Although the Spring House Greening program is over, everyone is encouraged to bring their Household Hazardous Waste to the recycling centers at the Waste to Energy Facility, the North County Transfer Station or the Valley Transfer Station. Many of these items are still useful or can be recycled, and each of the recycling centers has a "reuse table" where you can pick up unused paint and common household chemicals for free after signing a release. Call the Recycling Hot Line, 625-6800, for more information.

"Many thanks go to the sponsoring agencies for their support of Spring House Greening," said Geoff Glenn, disposal superintendent for Spokane's Solid Waste Management department. "We are especially appreciative of, and grateful to, all the volunteers over the years who were the heart of the program."