

Richland County recycles; so can you

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MANSFIELD – Anyone born after 1970 should be familiar with the popular Earth Day slogan, “Reduce, Reuse and Recycle,” but putting that slogan into practice can be difficult.

What can be reused? Where can you recycle? How do you really reduce consumption?

Richland County Regional Solid Waste Management Authority has become a one-stop shop that can answer those questions and provide an outlet to do just that: reduce, reuse and recycle.

They’ve done the work for residents, and now they need residents to come to them.

“It’s easy to recycle, but it’s an unknown asset to the community,” Ken Bender, the agency’s executive director said.

Why recycle?

Recycling is the process that transfers numerous materials from the waste stream into useful products. They become the raw materials needed to create new products, the authority advertises in its recycling guide.

For example, recycled paper supplies more than 37 percent of the raw material used to make new paper products, including cereal boxes, tissues, printing and writing paper. Every ton of paper recycled saves 3.3 cubic yards of landfill space, according to the authority.

But recycling is not just about creating new materials. It’s also about saving materials from rotting away in a landfill or elsewhere where they can do harm to the environment, Bender said.

Today, the most important material to remove from the waste stream is plastic, Bender said.

It holds our drinks, cleaners, laundry detergent, food, milk ... you see how it can start to add up. Leaving those materials to breakdown in waterways, along roadways and in landfills can have lasting negative effects on the environment and human health, studies prove.

The chemical building blocks that make plastics so versatile are the same components that would be harmful to the environment, according to EnvironmentalHealthNews.org.

Chemicals added to plastics can be absorbed by people, and some of them have been found to alter hormones and have other adverse health effects. Plastic debris can disrupt, injure or poison wildlife, clog waterways and pollute drinking water, the website says.

Getting started

It's easy to stop the negative cycle — recycle.

The authority is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday at 1125 National Parkway.

The facility accepts designation 1 and 2 plastic (drink bottles, milks, soap jugs, etc.), newspapers, phone books, magazines/ catalogs, aluminum cans, steel cans, books, electronics/appliances, corrugated cardboard, inject cartridges, batteries, and some glass.

The items need to be sorted into respective categories.

Additionally, there are 14 permanent drop-off locations where people can bring their recyclables, and a SCRAP (School Community Recycling As Partners) trailer that rotates between 20 area schools between 2 and 4 p.m. weekdays.

All proceeds from the SCRAP collections can be used by the schools. For a full schedule, visit www.richlandrecycles.com.

Residents also can contact their local waste hauler to see if they provide a curbside recycling program.

And finally, some local businesses also accept general household recyclables. A full list of where each material can be dropped off in the county can be found at the authority's website under the Residential Recycling Guide tab. There also is a tab for businesses, noting where they can drop off their industrial materials.

Breaking down barriers

One of the barriers keeping residents from recycling, Bender speculated, was a lack of reimbursement. It's not very profitable to recycle.

When residents turn in recyclables to the authority or one of their drop-off sites, they're not paid for the items they give. It's a donation, Bender said.

Some businesses that accept items do provide compensation, but with fewer locations, they're not as accessible to the entire county.

Instead of thinking about monetary reward, Bender asks residents to think about the environmental impact: Recycling can help save the planet.

"It's to sustain our quality of life and sustain our natural resources," Bender said. "There are finite quantities."

Another barrier is having to sort materials.

A long-term goal for the state is to consolidate the waste and recyclables into a single-stream process so all materials could go into the same bag and be sorted later. Many larger cities have already started that process.

"That's really when we'll attain real recycling, when it's so convenient that a person doesn't have to do anything," Bender said.

Until then, residents still need to sort their items into respective categories.

To get started, people should designate separate containers for the items they plan to recycle. That way, the minute they need to throw something away, the receptacle is already there, Bender suggested.

"If you're serious about recycling, you have to make arrangements ahead of time," Bender said.

For more information on how or where to recycle, visit the www.richlandrecycles.com or call the office at 419-774-5861.

Other ways to help

- The authority supports the upcoming Earth Stewardship program, where residents are asked to help clean up roadside litter throughout April and May. All materials and collection are provided for volunteers.
- The authority also supports a composting program. Throughout the year, residents can drop off their leaves and yard waste. Then in the summer, residents can buy mulch and soil made from their scraps.
- Education is the key to recycling, especially when habits are instilled at a young age. The authority offers educational programs to schools and at its facility where youth can learn about the recycling process through hands-on activities.

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Permanent drop off sites:

- Bellville/Jefferson Township Garage, 89 School St., Bellville
- Bloominggrove Township Garage, 466 Ohio 603, Shiloh
- Butler Village Garage, Traxler St., Butler
- Crestview High School, 1575 Ohio 96, Ashland
- Jackson Township Garage, 3761 Plymouth-Springmill Rd., Shelby
- Lexington Village Maintenance Garage, 205 Mill St., Lexington
- Village of Lucas/Monroe Township Garage, Union St., Lucas
- Mifflin Township Fire Department, 2326 Park Ave. E., Mansfield
- Plymouth High School, 400 Trux St., Plymouth
- Plymouth Township Garage, 7025 Kuhn Rd., Shelby
- Sam's Club, 1070 Lex-Springmill Rd. N., Ontario
- Sharon Township Garage, 5141 Ohio 61, Shelby
- Springfield Township Road Department, 8 Ohio 314, Mansfield
- Weller Township Garage, Adario and Ohio 545, Mansfield