

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Single Stream Recycling and RNC Updates**

Newaygo, MI—March 11, 2016

### **THE RECYCLING CENTER AND RNC BUSINESS ENDEAVORS**

We invite you to visit us at The Recycling Center in Newaygo, where we accept several difficult to recycle items and materials (see details below). The public entrance is located on the north (Quarterline) side of our warehouse/plant/office (you will find the single stream collection bins on the southeast side of the building).

#### **Disposal Services**

We accept various difficult to recycle items at The Center, including hazardous waste materials such as fluorescent bulbs, household batteries, old electronics, and labeled and sealed containers of latex or water-based paint and certain household and lawn chemicals (please call ahead). Members recycle these items free. Limits apply. Non-members pay a fee that covers our costs. The fee structure is posted at The Center and on our website.

We also accept polystyrene (Styrofoam) at no charge at The Center and at our Cherry Street location in Fremont. Please make sure it is polystyrene and not some other type of foam. If it squishes down and bounces back, it is not polystyrene. We cannot accept insulation foam. We do accept "packing peanuts". Please bag and seal to prevent messes.

#### **Material Sales and Pickup Service**

Many people assume we get paid for the materials you recycle. We do not earn any return on materials collected in the single stream bins at our eight collection sites. We in fact pay substantial transport and tipping fees to dispose of them safely.

Do not load up your neighborhood single stream bins with cardboard. These are intended for household level use, and space is limited. Small amounts of household cardboard and paper/magazines/junk mail are acceptable. Please remember to flatten all boxes. Fully formed boxes dumped into the single stream bins take up significant space, resulting in more frequent dumping and increased costs.

We encourage businesses and all recyclers to dispose of your large loads of cardboard and paper/magazines/junk mail at The Recycling Center. You will find a long row of wire baskets for cardboard on the east side of our building. Currently paper must be brought inside to prevent weather damage.

We do receive a return on cardboard and paper brought to The Center, where it is bailed, stored, and when we have a truckload, delivered to the buyer. Currently we sell 6-7 truckloads (each 44,000 pounds – 40 to 44 bales) of cardboard per year. Each truckload nets us \$1,200 to \$1,400 depending on the going rate of cardboard that month. Paper has been a much slower startup. We have been collecting and bailing paper since moving to Newaygo in February 2015, and expect to sell our first truckload next month. Our goal is to build up paper pickup and shredding services to add to this bottom line.

### **Shredding Services**

We offer two levels of commercial shredding services: an economy "You Shred" option and a full service "We Shred" option with certification and documentation. RNC membership includes shredding privileges, and the services are available to non-members for a fee during public hours. We would appreciate your passing the word to friends and business acquaintances. Our goal is to build this budding business into a money-maker for RNC, while providing a far more affordable document shredding option than that of the big traveling companies. Let them know we do provide documentation and certification for the shredding of sensitive documents.

## **Sales**

As mentioned, we are selling baled paper and cardboard, which currently net about \$10,000 annually. Our goal is to double these earnings by this time next year. In order to achieve this goal, we are working on increasing our pickup service, the amount of paper and cardboard delivered to The Center, and shredding services.

We are also selling/turning around assorted recycled items we receive in great condition.

- Need just a pint or two of paint for your project? Come in and browse through good leftovers brought to the center by recyclers, and take them away for a buck or two. We also have assorted sealed, clearly labeled, and at times hardly used chemicals such as herbicides and plant foods.
- Do you raise chickens? We have all the clean, like new egg cartons you can use, free (within limits) to members and teachers, and for a great value to non-members.
- We have polystyrene coolers (with freezer packs if you want them) for sale cheap, great to good condition with perfect seals, choice of assorted sizes, popular with fishermen and campers.
- Before you head out to the store to buy packing peanuts for the package going out for your grandchild's birthday, come and see our selection at a small fraction of the cost. Small, medium, and large bags. These are in high demand around the holidays.
- Next time you visit The Center or see us at an event, ask about our beautiful T-shirts which state: "We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors. We borrow it from our children." They are available in assorted sizes in bone, yellow, and green colors.
- Ask also about our various entertaining and educational children's books about recycling.

## **OUTREACH, EDUCATION, AND THE RNC BOARD ROOM**

Over the past year, RNC has stepped up our efforts to interact and teach about recycling within the communities we serve. We are attending many trade shows and expos, talking to groups, and presenting in local schools and at summer camps. We are putting out assorted literature, and provide recycling guides at every collection site.

**Recycling Fair:** What better way to educate and help pay the bills than to have fun!! We are gearing up for our second annual Recycling Fair June 5, Noon to 3 pm, at Fremont Lake Park. Last year we kicked off the event with games and crafts out of recycled materials, and held a duck race down Daisy Creek ending at the mouth of Fremont Lake.

We're going bigger and *funner* in 2016! The Duck race returns. Recycle Man will be with us again. Games and crafts are expanded. We're adding pony rides and live frog races. Also new are The Great Recycling Benefit Auction, and Raffle Dazzle! The auction will offer up quality used items donated by our members and supporters. If you have good serviceable items you no longer use and would like to donate toward our fundraising efforts, please deliver them to The Recycling Center during public hours, or give me a call and we may be able to arrange a pickup. Raffle Dazzle is a series of 10 drawings of sponsored gifts, each valued at \$50-100. A single ticket buys a chance at all 10 prizes. For added fun, a single \$1 buys up to six tickets according to the buyer's throw of a giant die. We will have lunch and snack items and refreshments available, and the Fremont Fire Department will be on hand. Bring the kids and grandkids for a day of fun for all ages.

**Earth Day Contests:** RNC's second annual Earth Day Contests are currently underway at local elementary, middle, and high schools. Youths are competing for prizes in three areas: poetry, posters, and public service announcements. Winners will be announced on Earth Day April 22. Watch for a display of winning entries at your local library. A schedule will be posted on our website along with copies of the winning entries.

**Earth Brigade:** We have been excitedly preparing programming and educational materials to start a new environmental group for local youths with a particular interest in the 3 Rs – Reduce Reuse Recycle. We are seeking a location or possibly a series of locations in different communities for bi-weekly sessions. We are also seeking volunteer group leaders. We will train facilitators. No experience or knowledge needed. What we are looking for is passion for the environment and the 3 Rs, and an affinity for working with children. If you are interested or know someone who may be, please give me a call.

**Volunteers and Board Members:** If kids are not your thing but you have a passion for recycling and some time to donate for community betterment, we would love to hear from you and see where you might fit within the organization. We continue to seek additional board members who can offer insight and assistance in the areas of business, education, membership development, fund development, the nonprofit world in general, and leadership. We are currently seeking to fill several slots on our Outreach/Advocacy/Education Committee, and our Fund Development Committee. We also seek volunteers to help casually with jobs like construction and repairs, to help at trade shows and events, and for collection site maintenance. Give me a call to discuss further.

## **PUBLIC IMAGE – NAME CHANGE**

RNC has undergone tremendous change over the past year or two in an effort to keep recycling alive in our coverage area. The most obvious and significant changes include our conversion to single stream recycling in January 2015, and our move to Newaygo in February 2015. Although these measures have reduced our budget and kept us going, funding remains a struggle for us as it is for many nonprofits.

Based on averages, we estimate about 4,000 households use RNC single stream collection sites, but only about 400 are RNC members or Friends of Recycling. We have been working hard at educating the public about our costs and needs, however, due to our name, we are constantly battling a perception that we are

funded by Newaygo County. We do not receive any support from Newaygo County. We do receive contributions from some but not all municipal governments in our coverage area, but these do not come close to covering the costs of maintaining the sites.

The Board of Directors has therefore been considering changing our name to get away from the notion that we are funded by Newaygo County, and at its March meeting decided to hold a contest this fall to find a new name. You can imagine that such a change will be a lot of work, as all literature, the company website, and so on will have to be overhauled. It will likely be this time next year before the change takes place.

## **FINANCIAL UPDATE**

Moving to a more affordable location and converting to single stream recycling reduced our annual budget from \$300,000 to \$200,000. As we reach the one-year anniversary of our move and conversion, all RNC sites, Brooks, Garfield, and Croton Townships, and Fremont, Hesperia, White Cloud, and Grant, remain open. Our keen hope is to keep them all operational, and down the road add sites in local areas not currently serviced.

It's a great start, yet our financial situation remains grave. We currently face a \$60,000 deficit this fiscal year. Adding fuel to the fire, the safe disposal of hazardous materials, already costly, nearly doubled March 1, and Kent County Recycling tipping fees (where we take our recyclables) will triple January 1, 2017, jumping from \$10,000 to \$30,000 annually.

These and other jaw droppers are the result of complex challenges faced today throughout the recycling industry. For example:

- A few years ago, cardboard sold for \$120/ton, and office paper \$160/ton. Today, cardboard pays us \$50 and office paper \$80. These price drops are

largely due to severe reductions in overseas markets, especially China, whose middle class is steadily growing. With more buying power, their cardboard consumption has risen, triggering a reduction in the need for imported materials.

- Plastic bottles paid \$.25/ton three years ago, and sell today for \$.5/ton - which hardly covers freight. Materials recovery facilities are actually paying their markets to take plastic film. Plastics are worth reverse processing into crude oil when oil prices are high, but they are currently so low - \$38/barrel compared with \$116/barrel three years ago - that they are of little value to manufacturers. Although RNC no longer deals in plastics since single stream conversion, this is hitting Kent County Recycling hard - a startling \$1.6 Million deficit in 2015 - which they in turn are forced to pass on as higher tipping fees.
- Americans produce more than 93 million tons of electronic waste every year! This number hardly seems comprehensible. Even more shocking, 70% to 80% of the gadgets we discard go straight to landfills, many of them leaching toxins like lead, mercury, and cadmium into the soil and water (some states have banned e-waste from landfills; Michigan has not). What we do recycle is either disassembled and sold as scrap or shipped to developing countries where it supports repair or scrapping jobs and brings older but affordable technology to the population.

Sounds great and it is, but Americans are now discarding more e-waste than the world market can handle. Until a couple years ago, recyclers earned a return on e-waste. Now we are paying disposal companies to take it from us. CRTs (old TVs and computer monitors with cathode ray tubes containing as many as 10 pounds of lead) are flooding the market with the advent of flat screens. A couple of CRTs are dumped weekly at RNC collection sites because they are now so expensive to recycle. We had quite a job getting one 200-pound dumped big screen TV back to The Center. Safely disposing of that one big screen television set cost us \$80 at \$.40/pound. Until a couple years ago,

recycling companies could pass CRTs along for safe disposal at no charge. The costs were covered by subsidies legislated by the State of Michigan to original equipment manufacturers such as Sony and Panasonic. Unfortunately, the legislation was allowed to lapse and is not being reinstated just as CRTs are flooding the market, and these companies are not stepping up on their own. I asked former DEQ Director Dan Wyant, who retired in the face of the Flint water crisis, if the State of Michigan is working on legislation to correct these problems – the banning of e-waste in landfills, take-back subsidies on electronics containing hazardous waste – and he said any legislation would take at least three years. In three years, most of us will have replaced our old TVs and computer monitors with flat screens. Read into this what politics you will. In the meantime, small struggling recyclers like RNC will continue to suffer dumpings by people who cannot afford the cost of disposal.

- And that leads me finally to the most distasteful of subjects, costs related to the disposal of trash dumped at RNC single stream collection sites. Monitoring the eight sites, seven of these 24/7, is not possible, nor is video surveillance without electricity and internet service at the collection sites. Recyclers are on the honor system, and most are commendable in their efforts to get it right. In fact, I get calls every day by users asking about what can go in the bins. Then there are those scoundrels who take advantage and use our sites as dumping grounds. And so we are constantly dealing with trash dumped in or beside our bins – old carpeting, construction materials, furniture items, old toilets, dirty diapers and other household garbage. We've even had a refrigerator and a hot water tank. The list is long and cleanup costly in manpower and disposal fees.

## **HOW YOU CAN HELP**

Annual contributions from members, Friends of Recycling, and local municipal governments are the backbone of our annual budget. If you use RNC single stream collection sites, please become a member or Friend of Recycling, and contribute to the cost of maintaining them. You would not be able to dispose of the same amount

of trash at our suggested base rate of \$50 per year. We will not deny anyone membership based on limited ability to contribute, but most of us can afford \$50. If half of the households using the bins contributed to our costs, we could focus more of our time on education and service, and less on fundraising.

Don't dump trash in or around our collection bins, and if you see anyone else doing it, say something and better yet, report them. Dumping is illegal.

If you have time and passion for recycling, give me a call to discuss ways you can get more involved, whether it is on the Board of Directors, committee work, or casual help from time to time.

**Needs and Wishes List:** We are still setting up shop in our new home base. If you are replacing or wish to dispose of any of these still serviceable items, I would love to hear from you.

- Shelving—we would like to set up a display of items for sale in our public area.
- Refrigerator—old is fine if in good working order. This is for the use of our staff and for the storage of ice and cool beverages and so on for events.
- Tables and chairs—in particular we are wishing for the donation of some still solid tables and folding chairs for group activities when we work with youths.
- Power tools—we get by with what we have, but could use some solid working tools, and again, older and in good working order is great.
- People with construction talent to build us a paper collection bin, and to help with some repairs around the plant.

Thank you to all our supporters for all you do.

### **Recycling for Newaygo County**

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