

Subject: Step into Recycling  
By: Carey Pauquette-Schalm  
Organization: Isabella County Recycling Center  
Date: 2/22/06

Did you know...

One piece of paper can be recycled 6 times?

One piece of paper can last for decades in a landfill?

One piece of paper is all it takes to start recycling?

...It's that first tin can you rinse out, or the first junk mail you put in a separate bag, or the cardboard box you break down to fit in the bin. These are all examples of a first step toward recycling.

I am continuously telling people "it is more energy efficient to recycle." The energy used in transportation is far less than the energy necessary to transport virgin ore, and trash to landfills. The energy to mine, transport, refine, and convert virgin material to product is much more than the energy needed to refine and convert recycled material to a product. The cost associated to communities is much less. The cost for each household in Isabella County to rid themselves of a bag of recycling is much less than it costs to take it to a landfill. Recycling also provides more employment opportunities, reported to be 100 recycling jobs to 13 solid waste jobs (*Puzzled About Recycling's Value? Look Beyond the Bin*, United States Environmental Protection Agency, January 1998.)

I hate to say it, but I really think the people out there who say they don't recycle because it doesn't make sense are just coming up with excuses.

Old habits die hard, but at some point we must all face the music. Our lives must change to secure our future generations having a chance at the same standards of current living. I talked with a very enlightened 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class the other day. They have recently studied renewable and nonrenewable resources. Just to make sure we are on the same page here is a little review. Renewable resources are things we can make more of, for example trees, we can plant more... cultivate... plant more... cultivate... and so on. Non renewable resources are those things that we are using that we cannot make more of, such as oil, coal, and other fossil fuels. While they regenerate, taking millions of years, we are not using them at a slow enough pace to allow the process to happen. I love the idea of the Soy Biodiesel fuel now available in our community. I believe we are at a turning point in our search for renewable energy. Our non-renewable resources such as oil don't only produce our gasoline for our automobiles, but also produce our plastics. This is where we need to concentrate on conservation efforts, such as recycling. Recycling our plastics will help to stretch out the pace at which we are using our oil. A large portion of our oil is used in fertilizers that would be unnecessary with compost added to your lawn.

The point is we need to conserve what we are using. If it is recycling or using virgin ore to make materials, we will be using energy, and resources. The best way to conserve our resources is by recycling. Let's make what we have last as long as we can by reducing what we use, reusing what we have, and recycling what we don't need anymore.

Let's turn that wasted trash into valuable recyclables, and start today. I'm not asking for perfection by any means, just attempts. It only takes 21 days to change a habit, tossing the tin cans is a habit. It makes sense for our community, our kids, and our pocket books. Feel free to offer challenges on one condition, if I prove that I am right you'll recycle for the next 20 years. For challenges call the Recycling Hotline (989)773-9631.