

November 28th, 2007

Title: Unwanted Catalogs

When you went to your mailbox this morning, how many catalogs were inside? How about this week? How many of those catalogs do you receive, even though you have never requested them? How many do you receive because you have placed an order from a company in the past? How many catalogs do you receive multiple copies of? The environmental facts associated with catalogs in the United States are staggering.

Currently, 19 billion paper catalogs are produced and discarded annually. Every year over eight million trees are consumed in the production of paper catalogs. Other significant impacts from the catalog cycle include the production and disposal of direct mail which consumes more energy than 3 million cars. The manufacture, distribution, collection and disposal of catalogs produces global warming gases in addition to water and air pollution.

I have found a free service called Catalog Choice that allows you to choose which catalogs you no longer wish to receive. This helps preserve the environment by reducing unwanted junk mail. The web site to opt out of catalog mailings is: www.catalogchoice.org. To sign up you need to provide your contact information, but the web site promises that your contact information will only be used for declining catalogs, and that your information will not be sold or used for unintended purposes. Next, you need to collect the catalogs you no longer wish to receive, as you will need to retrieve your customer number from each one. It takes ten weeks to process your request, but it sure beats calling or emailing each catalog directly. There are several other services provided by Catalog Choice. If you do not see a catalog you wish to opt out of on the web site, you can click "suggest a catalog" at the bottom of the results list, and you will receive an email when that catalog has been added. You can also opt out of catalogs that are in other family member's names by adding additional names and addresses at "My Profile." The web site also promises that if you continue receiving catalogs you have opted out of after ten weeks, you can return to the website to report the infraction and they will follow up with the catalog provider. You can also spread the word about this service to your family and friends by clicking "Invite a Friend," or by posting a linked badge on your own web site. Merchants who provide catalogs to their customers can also utilize the site by requesting to be added.

Catalog Choice is good for you, as a free service to reduce unwanted catalogs. It is good for the merchant because it lowers their distribution costs and allows them to target their market better. It is good for the direct mail industry because it promotes better practices. Best of all, the environment benefits by reducing the amount of energy consumed, reduce carbon emissions, and reduce loss of forests. Catalog Choice is a project sponsored by the Ecology Center, is endorsed by the National Wildlife Federation and the Natural Resources Defense Council, and is funded by The Overbrook Foundation and the Merck Family and Kendeda Funds.

If you have questions about reducing unwanted catalogs or recycling, please contact me at 989-773-9631 or recycling@isabellacounty.org. Happy Recycling!

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