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Recycling Effort Requires Participation of Everyone

“It All Comes Back to You.” That is the theme for this year’s national America Recycles Day. On November 15, 2008, the country will celebrate the 11th anniversary of the first America Recycles Day, and the goal remains unchanged: to educate all Americans about the environmental and economic benefits of recycling.

For a number of years, the public has been urged to recycle whenever possible, and they have responded. Every year, Americans recycle approximately 1.25 million tons of glass and 67 million tons of paper. According to the National Recycling Coalition, in 1960 Americans recycled only 7.7 % of the waste produced – that number has grown to about 33%.

The National Recycling Coalition further points out that in the past year, the “amount of energy saved from recycling aluminum and steel cans, plastic PET and glass containers, newsprint and corrugated packaging was equivalent to

- The amount of electricity consumed by 17.8 million Americans in one year.
- 29% of nuclear electricity generation in the U.S. in one year.
- 7.9% of the electricity generated from fossil fuels in the U.S. in one year.
- 11% of the energy produced by coal-fired power plants in the U.S.
- The energy supplied from 2.7% of imported barrels of crude oil into the U.S.
- The amount of gasoline used in almost 11 million automobiles in one year.”

Since recycling saves energy, it also saves money and contributes to America’s energy independence by promoting renewable alternatives like the use of bio-fuels. Reusing materials promotes the conservation of natural resources, helping to limit and reduce global warming. And recycling is good for the economy.

Once materials have been collected, they must be processed and turned into other goods to be purchased by the consumer. One recycling source notes that reusing materials results in the creation of six times as many “waste-related” jobs as would have existed if the same material was handled as trash. New industries are created, new products produced using less energy, and the consumer is given a wider range of items to purchase.

It should be obvious, then, that recycling consists of three parts: collection, manufacturing or conversion, and buying. Most communities now have some form of recycling program in place, and the public is recycling items at a greater rate than ever. With more materials available for reuse, there is ample opportunity for manufacturers to produce new consumer goods with recycled material. But in order for recycling to work, there must be a market for recycled goods. The more products made from recycled material people buy, the more diverse and viable the manufacturing companies will be. The consumer is an important part of the recycling

process by recycling whatever they can in the first place, and by purchasing products made from recycled materials whenever possible.

As we approach November 15th, the Central Connecticut Health District encourages everyone to continue to recycle, and to buy recycled products. Please consider taking the America Recycles Day Pledge:

“ I will buy more recycled content products, increase my recycling efforts at home, school, and work, and participate in other recycling-related efforts or community events.”