

# WASTE BYTES!

*Newsletter of the Maine State Planning Office, Waste Management and Recycling Program*

## ***Announcing Maine Recycles Week 2011!***

***Maine Recycles for 25 years***

***Step forward and give yourself the well-earned pat on your back!***

Over the last 12 years, there were many students who rose to the occasion and many schools were repeatedly recognized during or for Maine Recycles Week. There will be competitions; however with the State Planning Office being redistributed the competitions will come under other parties. As our term of competitions came to end, one special young lady from the Stepping Stone Montessori School in Chelsea had been recognized for her third year in a row. Her picture graced the cover of the 2011 Maine recycles calendar. The picture below would have been the center of this year's poster for Maine Recycles Week 2011.



There is no poster promoting Maine Recycles Week being sent to the schools, towns or businesses this year, so attached is Theresa Gervais' work of art announcing Maine Recycles Week 2011 for the communities of Maine. We also want to thank the thousands of children who have participated in Maine Recycles Week activities in their schools over the past decade or more and now hopefully are serving as examples as responsible members of our communities.

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### *Have You Ever Considered Making Your Own 2012 Maine Recycles Calendar?*

Roger Mosley from Standish once asked me if he could use the layout for the Maine Recycles calendar for a town calendar. I thought for a second and then felt honored. It occurred to me that if every community in Maine had their own recycling calendar then the State of Maine would be making notable strides towards its statewide recycling goal. Just in case we become disconnected, let me explain how you go about making a calendar for your Maine Recycles Celebration.

If I must say so, the calendar was always a great idea. My first year in the office, I attended a Northeast Recycling Council (NERC) meeting in New Hampshire. In one of the sessions, the presenter emphasized that the best reminders for recycling were things that would be in front of individuals each day. His favorites were calendars and refrigerator door magnets. No peer pressure here, since we always wanted each household to have one. Of course we always wanted each child to be a winner in the poster contest and every school to receive something for their efforts during Maine Recycles Week – even now we have a long way to go.

It isn't so far-fetched though. To begin with, almost every piece of word processing software has a calendar template. For the more serious, each copy of publishing software empowers anyone with just a little more creative ability, if you can or find someone who can add the skill. If it isn't there, the Internet has all the answers and half the questions again. As a matter of fact, when our office's software grew too old to generate another year, the internet gave directions for turning our software into a perpetual calendar. The last draw may be linked to your printer – that is the printing firm that you use for multiple copies will hopefully have the software and the skill.

### *25 Great Years Deserves a Celebration*

This year we are asking the communities to celebrate the successes they have had with recycling over the last 25 years. With this silver anniversary between Recycling and the State of Maine, we look back and can think of about half that time having been led by Maine Recycles Week. Mainers don't need to be reminded about Maine Recycles Week. It was and is the 7 days leading up to and including November 15 of each year. During that time we ask the municipalities throughout Maine to celebrate what they have accomplished to reduce their waste stream through the various management steps identified in the Waste Management Hierarchy, which has recognized recycling as a major strategy that has proven successful. By planning activities in the first part of November, it is hoped that not only will it offer the feel good opportunities but also it will help to raise the public awareness toward the importance of recycling and buying items made from recycled materials to create markets for recycling.

From the beginning, we knew that schools are an important part of many communities and are often recognized as the center of activities. While activities were taking place in our cities and towns, the Maine Recycles Week Steering Committee initiated a school competition. It soon came to pass that the committee noticed that almost every competing school had students drawing or painting posters promoting recycling. The idea was to select the best posters to create a calendar that would display the students' artwork and hold our message in front of the public each year. After some trying, the MRW Steering Committee arrived at a practice of having the best poster on the front of the next year's committee poster as well as being on the cover of the new calendar.



### *Have You Ever Consider Making Your Own 2012 Maine Recycles Calendar?*

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By setting the criteria fair and yet high enough to assist with consistent judging by a committee, the poster contest can be fun as well. I thought too about having professional artists submit their pictures for their favorite month or month in which they were born for another chance to celebrate. Your goal, should you accept this assignment, is to raise the public awareness toward recycling and the importance of purchasing items made from recycled materials while establishing your annual recycling rate at well-over 50%. You have no excuse, if you have a perpetual calendar – or maybe that is the best excuse for big time procrastinating. Give it a try and good luck.

Everyone looks for the tips and facts. Even after 25 years of recycling, people are surprised at some of the added notes. If you think about it with your committees, you will find that the number that your little group can remember could be amazing. There is the Internet as well; however my favorites are the original tidbits. My very favorite came from a time when Hank had visited Bath Iron Works. Knowing the weight of recyclables, we then took the weights of various ships BIW built to ‘make up’ a convoy of recyclables that would weigh the same. It was great fun for everyone and very much a surprise.

Finish your cover off with your own message. The Maine Recycles Calendar has always used the extra pages to support our instate reuse centers. Since the whole purpose is to help celebrate recycling in your community, you might recognize your schools or approach business to assist in financing the printing of the calendars. The possibilities are endless, and I will personally cheer on anyone who is interested.

### *Where Do We Go From Here? Maine Recycles Is on a Mission*



**New compost pad for Skowhegan**

The above picture was just recently received at the SPO. It is of the new municipal compost pad built by the Town of Skowhegan, aided with a grant from our most recent round of Capital Improvement Grants.

When first looked at, it looked like Randy Gray was telling us something with this picture - it almost seemed like an arrow reminding us that there was still plenty of future ahead. When you gain perspective, it could almost be a road: the road to Oz; the “road less travelled”; or maybe just the path ahead. We can read into a picture anything that we want to. In Skowhegan, they are excited about a new addition to their facility that opens up new ground to work toward their goals. That is certainly grounds for celebration.

And in looking ahead, a handful of University students have spent several weeks this summer taking a look at characterizing what we throw away, to provide an updated analysis of ‘what is in our trash’. When we visited them, we were always greeted with the smell of ripe waste and a team of positive professionals working towards an answer. The results will hopefully reveal a lot and help set our course for the future. That will certainly be a reason to celebrate!

### ***When Was the Last Time You Had to Tell a Mainer How to Celebrate?***

When was the last time that there was an open house held at the recycling facility? After 25 years, do you think that your residents know that despite the differences, arguments, and hard decisions that had to be made in the town affairs – there was in one area anyway where neighbors worked with neighbors and all worked together?

When we say that we recycle at a certain percent, do we say we are trying or do we ask who isn't recycling? Is it how much we do or how many do what? When was the last time, we thanked the attendant for what they did and the reply was thank you for making it all possible?

The future is indeed in our hands. The future is today!

Here are some tips to consider in planning your community's 'celebration of recycling':

- If anyone can remember Pogo from the comic strips, you certainly will remember: "We have met the enemy and they are us!" Find out who you are. Get your neighbors to sign pledges to recycle. Ask how well they recycle and then get them to revving it up a notch.
- Print up small stickers to go along with our theories of Community Based Social Marketing. By this time we should be displaying outward signs of our commitment to offer peer pressure or prods to get others on board.
- Get on the agenda of public events! Thank the council for their support and ask for a proclamation from the mayor or town fathers for the week.
- Take advantage of the whole week to engage different themes for different days to stretch out activities. Reuse – adopt a reuse center or stage a town yard sale to benefit a town project
- Plan an event like a senior softball game where each team has to have an average age of 50 on the field. (If a ringer shows up in the lineup, then there had better be someone over 80 to balance them!).
- Have a cribbage tournament with kids challenging the elder care home residents.
- Have a day to celebrate your local library. Have books circulated saved someone from having to buy a copy to sit on their shelf.
- And the list goes on...contact us for more ideas or to let us know what you are planning on doing.... We'll post the ideas to our website for others to see...

Expect to hear from us on a regular basis as we work to help programs celebrate recycling!!

