

Go Green

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“Go green!” is the mantra that is touching all aspects of our daily lives. Today, there is a heightened awareness of all things “green.” We hear about “green” cleaning products that are less hazardous to use, “green” modes of transportation that use less energy and lower emissions, “green” building techniques which incorporate a variety of energy conservation techniques to lower costs and improve efficiency, and “green” jobs that help improve our economy and environment at the same time. Our environment is the air we breathe, the water we drink and the land we live on. How we treat it has an impact on our health, safety, economy, and our quality of life. I want to take some time to tell you about what we are doing in the Twin Cities Metro Area to help us all be good stewards of our environment.

Did you know the average Twin Cities resident throws away about seven pounds of garbage per day? To put this into perspective, our region throws away enough garbage to fill the Metrodome 11 times each year. I believe all of us want to do the right thing for our environment. We want to dispose of waste responsibly, but how? www.RethinkRecycling.com is the one stop website for our questions. It is designed to help businesses and individuals make the right choices. Rethink Recycling is a program of the Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board, which is a six-county joint effort to improve our environment through coordinated policies and activities. I serve as vice-chair of the SWMCB, and helping each of us make good environmental choices is one aspect of our mission. RethinkRecycling.com offers tips and information to residents, business owners, parents and kids on the why’s and how’s of reducing, reusing and recycling or properly disposing of waste, and closing the recycling loop by buying products that are not only recyclable, but that contain recycled materials.

Some of the simple tips for residents include buying refillable or reusable containers and taking reusable containers, like a coffee mug, to work or school. When making purchasing choices, read the label and choose products with less harmful ingredients, and try to cut down on packaging by buying in bulk or purchasing products in concentrated forms. If you don’t need a bag, don’t take one, and if you do get plastic bags, recycle them through the “It’s in the Bag - Plastic Bag Recycling Program.” You can find links to national websites to remove your name from junk mail lists. Over 10% of our garbage is food waste and much of that can be composted. You can compost your food and yard waste at home or take your yard waste to a community drop off site. Visit www.RethinkRecycling.com to find instructions on how to compost in your backyard or to find a location near you to drop off your yard waste to be composted.

We also need to be mindful of the potentially harmful effects of throwing toxics into the garbage or down the drain. Many items in your home need to be specially disposed of, from household cleaning products and paint to televisions and computers, even old prescription medicine. If they are not, they could leach harmful chemicals into the ground or into the water. RethinkRecycling.com has the easy solutions to a better environment only a click or two away.

Tips for businesses include how to improve the bottom line and protect our environment through smart purchasing, digital solutions, shipping in reusable pallets and boxes, reducing, reusing and

recycling construction and demolition waste, and buying environmentally preferable products. Guides for the office, shipping or construction industries and government are included on www.RethinkRecycling.com.

Reduce, reuse, recycle and buy recycled - these are all things we can do as individuals to improve our environment. Each of us can have our questions answered through www.RethinkRecycling.com and choose the best ways to "Go Green!" The result will be a better world for generations to come.

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