

Niagara County Division of Environmental/Solid Waste

RETHINK YOUR WASTE

Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 1

September 2010

Special points of interest:

- New York State did it! They passed EPR legislation, becoming the 23rd state in the nation to do so!
- More Buzz from the Niagara County Environmental Management Council!
- What do you think your community curbside recycling rate is?



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Pharmaceutical Waste Collection

The United State Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) along with local government and police and public health partners are leading a nationwide prescription drug "Take-Back" initiative. This initiative seeks to prevent increased pill abuse, theft and waste water contamination. All potentially dangerous, expired, unused and unwanted prescription drugs will be collected and properly disposed at sites nationwide on Saturday September 25, 2010. This service is **free and anonymous**, no questions asked. Local collection sites include Lockport City Hall (1 Locks Plaza) the Old Niagara Falls Police Headquarters and North Tonawanda City Hall (216 Payne Ave.) from 9:00am to 1:00pm. To find other locations nearest to you, visit www.dea.gov or [click here](#). (note: some event times may be from 10:00am to 2:00pm)

For more information about the dangers of unused medication, visit

www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com

Besides a public health concern, flushing prescription drugs also poses a significant

threat to fresh water resources and aquatic species. Recent studies analyzing fresh water have confirmed the presence of trace levels of pharmaceuticals, and further studies have been commissioned to assess the impact of these levels on fish and other aquatic wildlife. Since the amount of the drugs found in our water supply is hundreds or thousands of times lower than the quantity found in the medications that we take, it is not clear what the potential harm is to humans.

Either by human excretion or by pouring down the drain/flushing, wastewater treatment facilities cannot remove all pharmaceutical waste from the wastewater. Therefore, it becomes imperative that we limit as much of what we can going down the drain. Alternatives to flushing can be found at www.rethinkyourwaste.com/special-wastes.asp and include ideas to keep small



children, pets and the environment safe.

Many states, including New York, are researching policies that will require the distributors and manufacturers of pharmaceutical waste to take back their products from customers. The intent of such legislation is to avoid the burden municipalities face with coordinating and conducting collection events, prevent accidental poisoning and drug abuse, and help protect our fresh water supplies.

Check back at www.rethinkyourwaste.com for legislative updates and announcements of future collection events!



The Niagara County Environmental Management Council wants you to help our bees and other pollinating insects!

Pollinating insects, such as honeybees, wasps, hornets, and butterflies are at the heart of our food production needs. We rely on pollinators for nearly 75% of all our foods, such as fruits, seeds, nuts and berries, and for the beef and dairy products that come from cattle raised on alfalfa. Pollinating insects are extremely important to Niagara County as agriculture is the leading economic industry in our community.

Why do honeybees and pollinating insects need help?

Honeybees and pollinating insect populations are in crisis. The combined effect of insecticide use, habitat loss and starvation have contributed to Colony Collapse Disorder, which is responsible for the rapid declines in

pollinating insect populations.

HOW TO HELP POLLINATING INSECTS:

1. **KEEP YOUR YARD PESTICIDE FREE!** To keep your grass green, fertilize with grass clippings from a mulching mower.
2. **CREATE A FRESH WATER SUPPLY IN YOUR YARD.** Place a plate, pot or shallow lid filled with fresh water someplace in your yard. This will provide a drinking water source for the pollinators. To avoid mosquito's, empty and replace every 3-4 days.
3. **LET IT GROW!** Reserve parts or a part of your yard for natural, wild (indigenous) vegetative growth. What we commonly refer to as "weeds" are actually a valuable food

source for pollinating insects.

4. **LANDSCAPE WITH HEIRLOOM:** When planning your landscaping and gardening projects ask for heirloom plants, trees, shrubs and vegetables. Heirloom products produce fruits/nuts/seeds/berries, which are a terrific food source for pollinating insects! Most other products are genetically altered and sterile, and do not provide a food source for pollinators.



On May 28, 2010 New York became the 23rd state to pass Extended Producer Legislation.

This law has been called the "most comprehensive" e-waste management bill in the country.

New York State passes Extended Producer Responsibility Legislation!

IT PASSED! The new law will go into effect April 1, 2011 and ensure that every New Yorker will have the opportunity to recycle their electronic waste in an environmentally responsible manner. Under this law all manufacturers are required to establish a FREE convenient system for the collection, handling, and recycling or reuse of electronic waste. Manufacturers of electronic equipment will be responsible for implementing and maintaining an acceptance

program for their discarded electronic waste, with oversight by the NYS Department of Environ-



mental Conservation (NYSDEC, 2010).

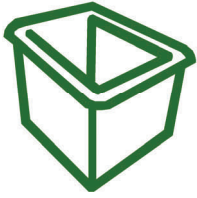
The items covered include: Computers, Televisions, Small scale servers,

Computer peripherals (monitors, keyboards, mice, fax machines, scanners and printers), VCRs, DVRs, Portable Music Players, Digital Video Recorders, Digital Converter Boxes, Cable and Satellite Receivers and Electronic or Video Game Consoles.

This law is still very new and collection

programs are in development. For more information about this law and upcoming collection events, e-mail: recycling@niagaracounty.com





Local Recycling Efforts: How full is your recycling bin each week?

The intent of trash collection and disposal is to get our garbage out of sight and keep it out of mind, but is that the right state of mind? We know the mantra; reduce, reuse and recycle, so are we following it?

Based on national statistics the average American recycles and composts 11-lbs of recyclables and yard waste each week! Locally in Niagara County, we only do a fraction of that, at about 3.5-lbs per week.

When you look around every single thing you see will eventually become trash one day! As consumers, we consistently buy, use, throw away, and replace stuff. Much of what we purchase are non-durable goods, or items that are purchased for immediate consumption and have a life span ranging from minutes to a few years.

Examples of non-durable goods include the daily newspaper, all types of packaging, and food items. Although we may be buying more and more stuff that eventually will get tossed, we do have the ability to recycle a lot of it, and it keeps expanding every year. Take for example; plastic bags; did you know that each retailer is required to provide plastic bag recycling by law? Also, just this year New York state passed a law requiring electronics manufacturers to collect as many old TVs and computers that they sell...for FREE! Although these items don't go into your recycling bin, they can still be recycled!

Nearly 30% of the trash you generate can be recycled just by putting it into your bin! Here is a list of the primary household items that should always end up in our recycling bins: **Cardboard, Paperboard (i.e. cereal and shoe**

boxes), Junk Mail, Office Paper, Magazines and Catalogs, Newspaper, Phone Books, Aluminum Cans, Steel and Tin cans, Glass, and Plastic Jugs and Bottles. Depending on who collects your recyclables, there may be more items included. To view all the acceptable recycling items in your community, visit www.rethinkyourwaste.com/municipalities.asp.

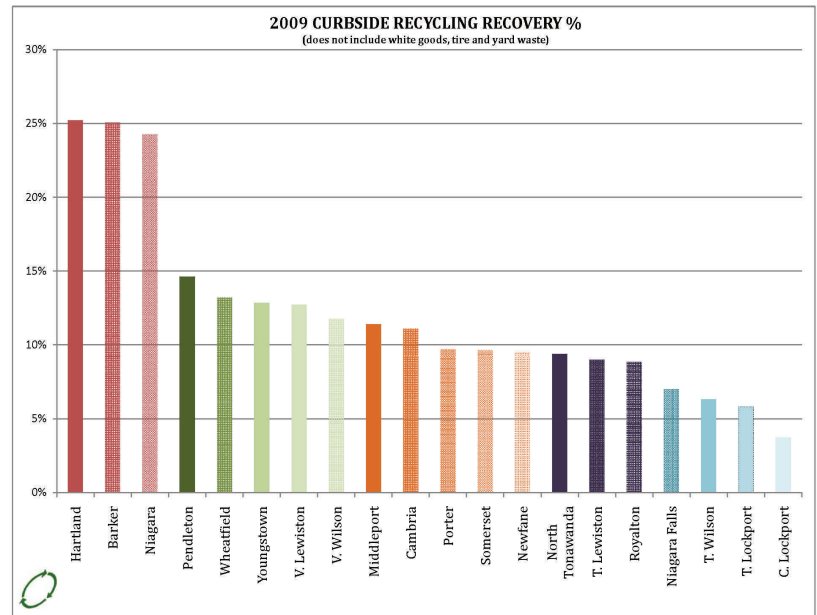
Nearly everyone in Niagara County has a recycle truck pass by their home each week. Whether we think about it or not, this is a service that we pay for through our property taxes. All you need to participate is a recycling bin. If you don't have a recycling bin, contact your local clerk or public works office about obtaining a new one.

Residents should realize two important aspects about garbage and recycling in Niagara County 1. Everything we put to our curbs or throw away will be buried or incinerated right here in our community, and 2. The recycling industry supports a strong local economy and creates more jobs than waste disposal.

How is our entire community do-

ing? Since 2000, Niagara County's recycling numbers have been stagnant, ranging from 12-15%...the national average is close to 35% and increases each year. The good news is that we have room for improvement and our numbers can only get better with some diligence!

To boost our waste diversion rates, besides adding everything you can to your recycling bin, you can also decrease your volume of trash by composting your yard waste and food scraps. Before we know it, leaves will be falling, so if your city/town/village provides leaf and brush collection, take advantage of it! Yard waste represents about 15% of our household waste and food scraps account for close to 10%. If you want to give home food scrap composting a try, visit www.rethinkyourwaste.com/composting.asp of home composting guidance!



David Zax; The DustClean street sweeper, left, and the DustCart robot, which picks up garbage.

Just for Fun; a trash-bot?

As a kid, one of my favorite shows was "The Jetsons". I remember how I couldn't wait for the 21st century, when I could buy an aerocar with a transparent bubble top that would fold up into a briefcase! Well, it is 2010 and I don't have anything that resembles a space car, but in the small Tuscan town of Peccioli, Italy, they have something close to Rosie!

An experiment long in the making called Dust

Cart, is a robot that you call from your cell phone to pick up your trash. It is GPS driven, and when it arrives it will text you, take up to 70-lbs of garbage and then roll away to the dumping station! To read more about DustCart, [click here](http://blogs.wsj.com/digits/2010/08/31/) or visit <http://blogs.wsj.com/digits/2010/08/31/>

If something similar to Rosie is already here, then maybe the foldable aerocar with a transparent bubble top is next!

(And, because I can't resist: "Rats Rall Right!")

NIAGARA COUNTY

ENVIRONMENTAL / SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

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www.rethinkyourwaste.com

Rethink Your Waste: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!



We are on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/rethinkyourwaste



Rethink Your Waste is committed to 3 goals for the community of Niagara County: reducing the amount of waste generated, reducing the toxicity of our waste, and increasing recycling!

Visit us online at www.rethinkyourwaste.com, on Facebook, or by e-mail at recycling@niagaracounty.com



Is The New Bottle Bill Any Better? You be the judge.

This past October recycling in New York took a leap forward as the Returnable Beverage Container Act, or Bottle Bill, was expanded. Since 1982, when the original Bottle Bill went into effect, it has been the state's most successful recycling and litter prevention program. At the original time of passage non-carbonated drinks and bottled water were non-existent, but today they represent not only 25% of all single serve containers, but the least recycled container in New York!

For seven long years New York policy-makers squared off against a well funded "bottler" lobby. Among several changes to the original bill, the "Better" bill sought to include **all** beverage containers and allow the state to keep unclaimed deposits. If you were a bottler you might have

been pretty mad too! Since 1982, bottlers have profited close to \$1.6 billion dollars from unclaimed deposits!

The powerful bottler lobby argued that they needed the unclaimed deposits and the state said they needed them too. After several years of going back and forth, a compromise was reached; only water bottles were tagged for a deposit (*so, all your other containers should go into your recycle bin*) and New York would retain 80% of all unclaimed deposits. (*The remaining 20% stayed with the bottlers.*)

This compromise made some **cents** for New York. With an estimated 2.5 billion water bottles sold each year, paired with a 20% unclaimed rate, New York estimated that nearly \$150 million dollars in NEW funding would be made available. That is a lot of MONEY; unfortunately so much that it became attractive to use to fill the state's budget deficit. In that

case, it gives the impression that the state doesn't care if you return your deposit containers, because if you don't they get to keep part of your nickel!

All head shaking aside, the Bigger Better Bottle Bill is about recycling and recognizing that we can do a lot better in New York. Recycled plastic bottles have an abundance of uses as do aluminum and glass containers. Recycling is a viable industry in New York and a steady supply of recycled materials helps to create and sustain jobs. If that fact alone isn't enough incentive to recycle, then perhaps you are fed up with New York getting creative with closing the state budget gap. The difference with the "Better" bottle bill is that we all have the choice to take our containers back for redemption and to keep our nickels. By doing just that, we are emphasizing the true intent of the bottle bill by keeping recyclable materials out of the disposal stream.

NEXT ISSUE- JANUARY 2011 features:

Agricultural Waste, Household Hazardous Waste and "10 things you never have to throw away"