

From recycling to 'repurposing' at local arts and crafts jamboree event

Written by By Chrissy Largo Sun Correspondent
Friday, 30 October 2015 04:46



Recycling and reusing things comes as second nature for Betsy Windisch, who has been recycling since she was a young girl.

“It was something that we just did. Back in the old days, with beer bottles, you took them and there was a deposit on our glass,” said Windisch, a McKinley Citizens’ Recycling Council board member. “I remember we used to have milk delivered to our door when I was really little. Of course, you just put the empty glass milk container back outside and the milk man would come pick it up.”

Windisch owes much of her recycling and reusing regimens to her parents who grew up during the Great Depression Era.

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Growing up in Baltimore, Windisch describes her parents as the type to reuse "everything" and it was a part of how she grew up. She added, "we didn't throw much away."

Today things are vastly different. Since moving to Gallup and being mentored by the well-known librarian, Octavia Fellin, who was responsible for starting the MCRC, a non-profit organization that began in 1989, Windisch and other members have continually held meetings to advocate for recycling, by reaching out to communities and forming partnerships with local governments and agencies.

"Convincing our city officials and our community has been a tough road but it's happening and we need to keep it happening," she said. "That is why we are so excited about the possibility of curbside [recycling] because it will make it easier for a lot of people to recycle."

Windisch describes curbside recycling as Gallup residents having the possibility of tossing their recyclables into one separate container while throwing all other trash into a dumpster versus just throwing all trash and potential materials into one dumpster.

"If and when this community decides to do curbside, I think the community is pretty much there," she said. "We just need to make sure the city officials say 'lets do it.' Once we do that, we need to be sure on how it is going to be done."

Since the MCRC has been in existence for over 20 years, members have done their share of attending local arts and crafts fairs which initially gave them the idea to promote local people who were making goods out of recycled materials. They also wanted to help them market their items.

"It is a way to talk about, to a wider audience, how to recycle. Something that is routinely been thrown away, we realize has another life. The catch word these days is 'repurposing' materials, or finding another use for them. Before, you 'recycled' them," said Windisch.

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On Oct. 31, the MCRC will be sponsoring Gallup's 5th annual event, "Recycling Jamboree Arts and Crafts Fair" at Gallup's Community Service Center, 410 Bataan Veterans St., from 9 am - 3 pm.

About 200 people participated in last year's event which also aims to celebrate "America Recycle's Day."

"America Recycle's Day" is celebrated annually on Nov. 15, to promote recycling, purchasing recyclable goods, and to educate about the benefits of recycling in local communities.

Gerald O'Hara, who has been involved with the MCRC for more than 10 years, and currently holds the position as vice president of the Board, said when it comes to recycling "we attempt to attract tourists through Gallup, they come and they are from places that have been recycling for decades. They get to Gallup and they are like 'what do I do with my soda can?' The recycling option is not there and it gives us a bad image."

He said this year the event is anticipating 20-30 vendors and a total of up to seven volunteers will be coordinating the festivities, which includes local entertainers, concession stands, vendors and crafts, door prizes, silent auction, a children's craft corner, and a booth to vote for your favorite "Kid's Recycled Sculpture."

"Each year has had some changing of what vendors show up," he said. But, there is always something unique and interesting that draws your attention."

One of the most unique recycled items that Windisch mentions is a painting palette made from colored plastic bottle lids.

"I have a friend, a recycling colleague in Grants, she took the different lids of red and blue, she had glue gunned the lids to a piece of cardboard, something pretty sturdy," she said. "When she worked with her kids, she'd put a little green paint in the green lid, a little white paint in the white lid, so she made little paint palettes for them."

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At the event, vendors will have a chance to showcase their recycled creation to spectators in the area and draw in interested buyers.

Kids are encouraged to wear a costume or mask made from recycled materials to receive a treat. Participants can stop by to donate canned goods and other non-perishable items to support the hungry to benefit the Jim Harlin community pantry.

The event is sponsored by the McKinley Citizens’ Recycling Council in association with the City of Gallup Solid Waste Department; the Northwest New Mexico Regional Solid Waste Authority; The New Mexico Recycling Coalition; and national non-profit Keep America Beautiful!

For more information, please call Betsy Windisch at (505) 722-9257 or Gerald O’Hara at (505)722-5142.