Waste Not, Want Not…

Ann Fordock, Recycling Specialist

When does nonperishable food go bad? It can be hard to tell with all those “by” dates. Did you know that “best by,” “use by” and “sell by” dates are NOT expiration dates?

Dates on all food products (except baby formula) have no bearing on food safety. The dates placed on containers by manufacturers refer to when the product is at peak quality. They also encourage the unnecessary trashing of perfectly good food.

According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, an international nonprofit organization devoted to protecting the world’s natural resources, public health and the environment, the average American household of four spends between $1,365 and $2,275 a year on food that is eventually thrown out.

A British study estimated that 20 percent of food wasted in British households is due to misinterpretation of date labels. If this same estimate were applied to American food waste, it would mean the average U.S. household tosses $275-$455 of good food a year due to confusion over expiration dates.

Did you know “best by” dates on foods do not indicate their expiration? Confusion over date labels may cause Americans to throw out between $275 and $455 of good food a year. Reduce your food waste by bearing this in mind next time you are thinking of tossing “old” food; consider donation or composting instead.

Propane tanks...PG 5

Learn where and how to recycle or dispose of 1-pound and 20-pound propane tanks.

Lawn Care...PG 3

Terry Ettinger explains why raking may be setting your lawn back.

Batteries...PG 2

July is curbside battery collection month; learn how easy it is to recycle your alkaline batteries.

Feeding America, the nation’s largest hunger-relief organization states that 46.5 million Americans use charitable food assistance programs (food pantries and soup kitchens) to meet their food needs, including 12 million children and seven million seniors.

With this in mind, consider donating unopened, nonperishable food, regardless of the “best by,” “use by” or “sell by” date, to the Food Bank of CNY. They can be reached at 437-1899 or at www.foodbankcny.org.

Another way to avoid food waste, especially of the perishable nature (maybe the tomato that went bad, last night’s potato peels or watermelon rind) is to compost your food waste. In Onondaga County there are several ways to explore composting:

Do-It-Yourself Compost

Go to www.tinyurl.com/OCRRAbackyard Composting for instructions on maintaining a backyard compost bin or indoor worm composting system. Not interested in constructing a backyard bin? OCRRA has compost bins available for sale. See page 8 for details.

Featured Food Scrap Recycler:

Steve Mooney of Syracuse

Let OCRRA turn your food scraps into a valuable soil amendment and minimize your waste with a Food Scrap/Yard Waste Compost Site Pass (available at OCRRA.org or at either Site for $35).

Passes are valid at the Amboy and Jamesville Compost Site and allow for the drop off of unlimited household food scraps / yard waste and the removal of up to 6 cu. yds. of compost or mulch.

Save the world a little each day.
Charging up Recycling

Anthony Angelo, Recycling Aid

It is time to grab those alkaline batteries you have been saving all year and recycle them! With OCRRA’s July curbside battery collection program, a yellow bag, and the urge to recycle you have all you need to help improve our environment.

The July curbside collection is for alkaline batteries only, including nine-volt batteries (commonly used in smoke detectors) as well as A, AA, AAA, AAAAA, C, and D batteries. The collection takes place during the entire month of July and requires you to place your yellow battery bag on TOP of your garbage for your hauler to collect. Bags must be visible to your hauler, so they should rest on top of your closed garbage bag or can.

Please do NOT place your battery bag in your blue bin or inside of your garbage can, as they will not be properly recycled. Yellow bags for household alkaline batteries may be obtained from OCRRA by emailing info@OCRRA.org; include your name and address in the body of the email and OCRRA will mail you a battery bag (while supplies last).

Year-round: Residents may also deliver button batteries (commonly used in calculators and hearing aids), rechargeable batteries (often used in cell and cordless phones), and alkaline batteries to OCRRA’s Rock Cut Road Drop-Off Site in Jamesville or to one of our collection bins at any Onondaga County Wegmans. OCRRA collects these batteries for recycling on a weekly basis.

Note: These batteries do not go in yellow battery bags. There are special battery preparation instructions for the grocery store collection bins. Visit www.ocrra.org/programs/battery.asp or grab a handy flyer, found at the grocery store collection bins, for instructions on battery preparation.

The year-round program at Wegmans is for residential batteries only; businesses can get battery disposal solutions at tinyurl.com/bizbatteries.

Rechargeable batteries are not accepted in the July curbside collection. Remember, the trash is not the place to dispose of batteries. Button batteries and rechargeable batteries can contain hazardous substances such as mercury, silver, zinc, nickel and cadmium. These heavy metals can contaminate our environment.

Working together, our community collects over 160,000 pounds of batteries each year for recycling. Please join in the July collection of household batteries and help keep our community clean and green!

Improve Workplace Recycling by 20% with this Simple Tip

Dave Nettle, Recycling Specialist

The United States Environmental Protection Agency estimates that up to 45% of the trash Americans produce is generated in the workplace. In 2014, Keep America Beautiful—a non-profit that is dedicated to helping people reduce waste and increase recycling—conducted a study that looked at ways to improve the quality and amount of workplace recycling.

The study focused on how recycling bin placement impacted recycling rates and contamination. When conducting the research four separate office recycling conditions were tested in commercial office buildings in Atlanta, Boston, Houston and San Diego:

1. Equal-Sized: Equal-sized recycling and trash bins were provided to employees (this is one of the more common office set-ups).

2. Recycling Only: Only a recycling bin was provided to employees. No desk-side trash can was provided.

3. MiniTrash: A Recycling bin was provided with an attached mini trash can.

4. Control: Recycling information was provided with no changes to the existing office set up. All conditions received a flyer listing five recyclable items and five trash items that are commonly found in office settings. Recycling bins were labeled with a logo featuring three common recyclable items—an aluminum can, a plastic beverage bottle and office paper. Trash cans were also labeled accordingly.

RESULTS:

1. Equal-Sized Group: Showed no improvement in recycling behavior.

2. Recycling Only Group: Several offices dropped out of the study as they found it inconvenient; no improvement was noted in the others.

3. Control Group: No significant changes.

4. MiniTrash: Produced improved quality of material collected in the recycling bin—an increase of 20 percent in the quality of recyclables—along with a significant increase in knowledge about recycling. Decreased the amount of trash collected in the trash can.

The key to a successful workplace recycling program is educational materials and strategic placement of trash and recycling receptacles. OCRRA Information Aid Maura Farrell shows off some of the recycling supplies (decals, posters, receptacles) that OCRRA provides to businesses for free. Visit www.ocrra.org/shop/supply-order-form to order supplies online or contact us for a free consultation today.

OCRRA takes alkaline, rechargeable and button batteries for recycling at local Wegmans. Battery bags are not required.
I want you to think back to how bad your lawn looked as the snow melted this spring. All the dead leaves, the patches of snow mold, the meadow vole trails, the snowplow damage, etc. It was pretty discouraging, right?

Remember also how much time you spent raking all of the dead leaves, grass and small twigs out of your lawn, bagging them, and then setting the bags at the curb for your municipality to haul “away.” Or, worse, think about the money you spent having someone do this for you?

I hate to tell you this, but not only was that effort necessary, raking your lawn and/or money spent unnecessary, raking your lawn may also have done more harm than good.

What?!!!

In a nutshell, you pulled a lot of perfectly healthy grass plants out of the ground while you were raking. This harms your lawn in two ways.

First, it’s not unusual to pull up five percent of the healthy grass plants out of your lawn, or damage them so severely that they die when you rake. This reduces the visual density of your lawn.

More critically, a lawn that is less dense will result in more sunlight reaching the soil surface. More light, in turn, will trigger the germination and early growth of a wide range of weeds—especially crabgrass.

Therefore, I strongly encourage you to stop raking your lawn in the spring. If you think this is crazy, keep in mind that there isn’t a golf course anywhere that rakes multiple miles of fairways each spring!

Accept that your lawn may not look great in April. Wait until it’s dried thoroughly, then lower your mower to two and one-half inches and go over it once to chop up leaves and remove dead grass blades. (You will, of course, have had your mower cleaned and tuned up over the winter and had the blade sharpened, too.)

Then, readjust your mower to cut at three to three and one-half inches, and get ready to mow twice a week once warm weather arrives. Less work/money, less debris to be hauled “away,” and a more attractive lawn.

Not only does doing less pay off—but, in this case, keeping your rake in the garage in the spring will!
Avoid Blue Bin Blunders

Everyone wants to recycle as much as possible, but putting things into the blue bin, when they cannot be recycled in our system, is not ideal. What is worse, some items actually slow down or stop the recycling process.

That is why it is important to recycle only the items that are accepted in the blue bin.

Blue Bin items include:

- newspapers, magazines, catalogs, softcover books, papers, mail, envelopes,
- glass jars,
- metal cans,
- plastic bottles (regardless of the number on the bottom),
- #5 plastic tubs (dairy tubs for instance)

When these items go in your blue bin, they are collected and transported to the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF), where they are sent through a complex system of sorting machinery.

Check out the video mentioned in the “Life after the Blue Bin” article below to see how the MRF works.

Did you know that the entire facility shuts down when plastic bags, hoses, chains, cords, and ropes get caught in the machinery?

Any one of those items grinds the recycling process to a halt. Workers have to climb into the machines and cut the offending items out. This takes time and slows the processing of good recyclables.

So, consult the OCRRA website when you have a question, if still in doubt, throw it out. Over-recycling isn’t the answer.

Share this info with your friends, family, co-workers and neighbors so everyone can work toward a perfect blue bin!

“Plastic bags are the largest contaminant in the blue bin. Do not put your recyclables in a plastic bag and then place the bag in your blue bin. Empty it and reuse it as a trash bag.”

When it comes to things that gum up the recycling process there are several main offenders.

The main offenders are:

- plastic bags,*
- hoses, chains, cords, ropes, belts, etc.

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Paper Shredding Event Protects Resident IDs

Dave Nettle, Recycling Specialist

The skies cleared up and the weather was dry for OCRRA’s spring paper shredding event on May 16. More than 1,900 residents showed up at NBT Bank Stadium to have their confidential documents shredded by OCRRA and its shredding partners, SMR Fibre / Confidata and Shred Solvers.

Over 83,000 pounds of paper were collected and shredded at this event. All of the paper was recycled into consumer products and 6,795 trees from recycled, which has saved 2004, more than 410 tons of toilet paper.

There are a second opportunity for residents to shred their personal papers on Saturday, September 19, 2015 from 8 am to noon, also at NBT Bank Stadium. The shredding is free and reservations are not required to attend. Attendees must enter from the Grant Boulevard (off Hiawatha Boulevard) entrance.

Please note the event is open to households in Onondaga County only and there is a limit of five bags or boxes of material. Documents from businesses are not accepted at these events. If your workplace needs shredding services please visit www.OCRRA.org or contact a professional shredding service listed online or in the phone book.

Event Preparation:

1. Pack only confidential documents, for example items containing private information such as account numbers or Social Security numbers. Junk mail, magazines, and other items that are non-confidential are not accepted; they should be recycled in your blue bin.
2. Amass your confidential documents in durable boxes, containers or paper bags. Do not use plastic bags and do not wrap documents in multiple bags.
3. Remove plastics (plastic bags, plastic binders, plastic folders), laminated paper, electronic media (computer disks, CDs, DVDs, etc.) and metal. Staples and paper clips are allowed.

OCRRA team member Bob Magari (left) and Michael Hanson from Confidata (right) empty confidential documents in preparation for shredding at OCRRA’s May Shred-O-Rama at NBT Bank Stadium. Over 1,900 residents destroyed their confidential documents and were in and out of the event in minutes. Mark your calendar for the next shredding event happening on Saturday, September 19 from 9 am to noon at NBT Bank Stadium. The event is free and reservations are not required.

Proper Propane Tank Disposal

Theresa Mandery, Recycling Specialist

As grilling season hits its stride in Onondaga County, it is important to know how to responsibly dispose of an old propane tank.

What you need to know:
• Reuse when possible. You can exchange empty outdoor grill tanks (20-pound tanks) for a full tank at any location that sells them.
• If you cannot reuse your propane tank, no pressure (pun intended), 20-pound tanks or tanks that are larger should NEVER be tossed into the trash or in the blue bin. Check out OCRRA’s “How do I get rid of…” database to find a list of local businesses that will take them for recycling. Access the database at OCRRA.org, click on the green box at the top right of the page and type in “propane.” Each location has specific preparation requirements, restrictions and possible charges, so call prior to bringing a tank in for disposal.
• Small camp-size tanks (one-pound cylinders) are the exception to the rule – if they are empty. They can go in the trash if they are EMPTY. They cannot go in the blue bin, even if they are empty. Be sure to use up ALL the contents before tossing one of these in the trash in order to avoid ignition and potential bodily harm. Ultimately, these metal tanks will be collected and recycled at the Waste-to-Energy Facility. OCRRA’s Rock Cut Road and Ley Creek Drop-Off Sites will also accept the small, empty one-pound propane tanks for recycling.

Theresa Mandery can be reached at tmandery@ocrra.org.
Local Environmental Champions Announced

Andrew Radin, Director of Recycling and Waste Reduction

What does actor Jack Nicholson, singer Beyoncé Knowles, OCRRA’s Theresa Mandery, Pastabilities Restaurant and the New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse, and Recycling (NYSAR) all have in common? They are all award winners!

While everyone knows about Nicholson’s Oscars (three), and Beyoncé’s Grammys (20), OCRRA is pleased to spread the news about the recent award-winning efforts of Mandery, Syracuse’s Pastabilities Restaurant and NYSAR.

On May 7, at its annual meeting in Syracuse, GreeningUSA presented OCRRA Recycling Specialist Theresa Mandery with its Outstanding Service Award. They also presented Pastabilities Restaurant with its Outstanding Service Award and NYSAR with its Outstanding Service Award from GUSA President John Przepiora.

As a result of ‘Re-Clothe NY,’ residents throughout New York have a heightened awareness of the need to keep textiles out of the trash in order to support jobs and minimize disposal impacts. This EPA Environmental Champion Award recognizes the environmental leadership of NYSAR members across the state and celebrates their daily efforts to help residents, schools and businesses in their local communities reduce waste and conserve precious natural resources.

To learn more about this award-winning textile recovery campaign, visit www.nystextiles.org.

OCRRA Recycling Specialist Theresa Mandery receiving the GreeningUSA (GUSA) Outstanding Service Award from GUSA President John Przepiora, in May: At this same ceremony, Pastabilities Restaurant received the GUSA Waste Management Excellence Award for their food scrap recovery and composting program.

According to NYSAR, each year, New York residents dispose approximately 1.4 billion pounds of recoverable clothes and textiles, with an estimated market value of over $200 million. NYSAR estimates approximately 9,600 jobs would be created across the state if that material was dropped off for reuse and recycling. Across the country, only 15 percent of recyclable clothes and textiles are actually recovered, while 85 percent ends up in landfills and waste-to-energy facilities.

Andrew Radin can be reached at aradin@ocrra.org.

Public Event Recycling

Is your organization or group hosting a community event (race, fundraiser, concert, etc.)? Would you like an easy way to collect bottles and cans for recycling? Borrow special, plastic recycling units from OCRRA for FREE!

Thanks to a grant from Keep America Beautiful, OCRRA has a limited number of ClearStream recycling units available to loan interested residents on a first-come, first-served basis.

Decreased the amount of recyclables erroneously placed in the trash can, especially that of office paper. Paper in the trash bin was reduced to nearly zero.

Conclusion: Giving employees recycling information and a clearly labeled recycling bin along with a trash can increases the quality of office recyclables by approximately 20%.

Our community does a great job with recycling, but there is always room for improvement and this study suggests that a 20% improvement is entirely possible at your work! So, what are you waiting for? Contact OCRRA to get free assistance in developing (or improving) your workplace recycling program. We offer guidance and free tools (posters, containers, decals, etc.) to help you out. Also, you do not need to be the big boss to get things going. We invite any employee to give us a call at 453-2866 or visit us online at www.tinyurl.com/OCRRA biztools and we will get you on your way.

Does your business already have a superb recycling program or is it allmost there? Then apply for OCRRA’s Blue Ribbon Recycler certification. This program is a simple and effective way to show your customers and employees that you care about conserving natural resources and have excellent recycling and waste reduction practices in place. Visit www.tinyurl.com/OCRRA blueribbon to learn about program requirements for your industry and the many benefits certification can provide your business.

Dave Nettle can be reached at dnettle@ocrra.org.

Workplace Recycling

continued from page 2

Visit OCRRA.org or call us at 453–2866 for details.
My first Earth Day was April 22, 1970. I was in eighth grade and still remember the celebration and the school cleanup we participated in that day. Earth Day is also my oldest daughter’s birthday; she has always marched to the beat of her own drum and has hugged a few trees along the way. For the record, my daughter is grown now and is a wonderful person and a terrific mom. I need to share that, so I don’t get in trouble...

Those that question norms bring attention to real issues. In the pre-70’s era, environmental issues took a back seat to Civil Rights, the Vietnam War and other important issues that garnered public outcry. Sadly, the environment was being abused without challenge. Oil spills, litter, smog and pollution were issues that plagued our world.

Do you remember the “Crying Indian” with the tear running down his cheek? The Keep America Beautiful public service announcement that aired in the 1970s was a high-impact, emotional anti-litter TV commercial. Check it out here if you are younger than me: www.tinyurl.com/70sPSA

Forward thinking environmentalists and a few bipartisan politicians banded together to bring awareness with rallies, protests and the first “National Teach-In on the Environment” – which ultimately evolved into Earth Day as we know it today. These pioneers questioned the norm of poor environmental stewardship. They began a movement that not only changed our behaviors through awareness, but were the impetus for responsible government involvement. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Clean Air Act, as well as many other regulatory standards were born from these initial seeds of awareness.

Let’s fast forward to Earth Day 2015. Environmentally conscious groups, OCRRA and our local public works departments came together to collect litter and beautify Onondaga County. More than 7,400 volunteers worked our roadsides, waterways and green spaces to collect some 96,000 pounds of litter! To all those who gave their time to improve our community, I say THANK YOU. Great things were done by people who rallied together for a cause, just like during the early Earth Days. I have to give a big shout out to the DPW teams that transported the litter to OCRRA for free disposal – all this and no accidents or injuries! Kudos.

So, why the history lesson? We have come a long way. Yet, the litter issue still exists. The tear still flows down the cheek. I am glad that thousands of committed volunteers gathered more than 48 tons of trash. Like many of us, I am upset that this much litter is out there. How can we reduce it? It starts with each one of us. Just like recycling, the behavior of each person determines the success of the program. Jump on board. You can make a difference by educating your children and leading by example.

Mark Donnelly can be reached at mdonnelly@ocrra.org.

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**From the Executive Director’s desk…**

**A Reflection on Earth Day**

Mark Donnelly, Executive Director

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**Honey Do List Got You Down?**

Want to dispose of debris from household remodels or clean-ups? Visit OCRRA’s Drop-Off Sites and we’ll help you out.

**Fees:**
- Cars, Mini-Vans, or SUVs, .................................................. $12
- Pick-Up Trucks, Vans, Single-Axle Trailers ........................ $25
- Tarps are required. All untarped vehicles are charged ...... $15

For more info on acceptable items or fees visit: www.OCRRA.org

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**OCRRA’s Drop-Off Sites**

**Ley Creek Drop-Off Site**
5158 Ley Creek Drive, Liverpool, NY 13088
7th North Street, east of exit 25 from Rt. 81, across the street from the Pilot Travel Center.
Hours: 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month: 8 am to noon

**Rock Cut Road Drop-Off Site**
5808 Rock Cut Road, Jamesville, NY 13078
Just east of the Rock Cut Road exit on Rt. 481 North, across from the Wasterto-Energy Facility.
Hours: Tuesday - Saturday: 7 am to 2:30 pm

**FACT:** Picking up litter year-round (even a few items a day) is an easy way to beautify our environment and lead by example.
Composting: Are you a Do-It-Yourself Type?

Looking to make compost in your backyard, but not sure you are ready to build your own bin? OCRRA can help! We have how-to instructions available at OCRRA.org and “Compost Converter” bins available for sale at both the Amboy and Jamesville Compost Site – on a first come, first served basis.

Compost Converter Bin - $49*

The Compost Converter turns your kitchen and garden waste into valuable compost. It is made from 100% recycled plastic and is strong and rigid. It needs no assembly and is easy to use. An extra wide hatch allows quick access to the finished compost or it can be easily lifted off the compost heap. Specifications: 30” x 30” x 36” (Volume: 58 gallons).

Both OCRRA Compost Sites are open Monday through Saturday from 9 am to 4 pm.

OCRRA has compost bins available for purchase at the Amboy and Jamesville Compost Sites. Monday through Saturday from 9 am to 4 pm. The bins cost $49 and are available on a first come, first served basis.

*Bins may be purchased by check only. Checks should be payable to Plastics Solutions Inc. No cash or credit cards are accepted.

Looking for Quality Compost in Bags?

Many residents who use OCRRA’s Premium Compost (1/4” screened) by the bag have told us they love the material for their gardens and landscaping. Below and at right are a few sentiments recently posted to the OCRRA Facebook page:

JoEllen Shermerhorn of East Syracuse tells us, “I absolutely love it. Started using it last year on my vegetable garden. This year filled the garden and the soil still looks great! I have told lots of people to use it.”

Jean Armour Polly says, “The first week I bought six bags. That was like a gateway drug. The next week, I got nine more. This week I got NINE MORE. I am sort of afraid of what will happen next week, lol.”

Want to get in on a good thing? You can purchase 1 cu. ft. bags of OCRRA’s Premium Compost at any of the retail locations listed below.

Area Suppliers of OCRRA’s Premium Compost

- Aspinali’s Tree Nursery and Landscaping, Chittenango
- Ballantyne Gardens, Liverpool
- Buyea’s True Value Hardware, Cazenovia
- Deaton’s Awgway, Pulaski
- Green Acres Garden Center, Liverpool
- Green Hills Farms, Syracuse
- Green Scapes, Jamesville
- Lan’s Flower Farm, Clay
- Lee’s Feed Store, Syracuse
- Manlius True Value Hardware, Manlius
- Oliver B. Paine Greenhouses, Fulton
- Silver Spring Farm Market, Syracuse
- Skaneateles Town Square Ace Hardware, Skaneateles
- Sollecito Landscaping Nursery, Syracuse
- T.J.’s Lawns Plus, Phoenix
- The Evergreen Mart, Syracuse
- Twin Oaks Nursery, Syracuse
- Vollmer Farms & Farm Market, East Syracuse
- Wagner Farms, Rome
- Watson Farms Landscaping & Garden Center, Laffayette
- Westvale Gardens, Syracuse
- Zerrillo Gardens, East Syracuse

Q: Do you collect old expired medicines and vitamins? People tell me to give to a pharmacy, then another says not to, put them in ground coffee...

A: While there ARE a few ways to properly dispose of old medications, OCRRA recommends you put them in your trash in a disguised manner (mixed in coffee grounds, etc.), as they will be sent to the Waste-to-Energy Facility where they are burned in a controlled environment. You can also bring them to a pharmacy that accepts them, though they send them to a Waste-to-Energy Facility for final disposal. As you are likely aware, medication should never be thrown down the drain nor burned at home as these options strain the waste water treatment system and can harm the environment, animals and humans.

Follow OCRRA on Facebook and ask us all your recycling and disposal questions!