LIVE SMART

SMART RECYCLERS

Gibsons Recycling Depot – rethinking waste

LiveSmart BC

Editor's Note: This is the seventh in Coast Reporter's 12-week LiveSmart series, in which we will feature an outstanding individual, group or association that is contributing to a sustainable future in our community.

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Even on a rainy weekday, the Gibsons Recycling Depot, on Venture Way, is bustling with activity. It helps that the expansive yard is well organized into labelled bays, so recyclers can drive right up close to bins, avoiding the impending deluge.

And as soon as someone new arrives, one of the crew shouts hello and helps direct recyclables to the appropriate places. You're as likely to be greeted by hands-on owner Buddy Boyd or yard manager Barb Hetherington as you are to meet one of seven other friendly staffers.

It's obvious that recycling is both passion and profession at this depot. Open seven days a week, the organization is the largest privately owned non-governmental funded recycling depot in the province. If Boyd and Hetherington have their way, its positive impact on the Coast and on the planet will continue to grow.

"Our mandate is to continually expand the waste products we can take and recycle," notes Hetherington. "We are constantly looking for ways to reduce what goes into the waste stream."

The Gibsons depot currently accepts the following recycling items for free: cardboard, cell phones, cell phone batteries, computer and computer accessories, glass, ink jet cartridges, monitors, paint, paper, plastic, rechargeable batteries, tin cans and televisions. Alkaline batteries and Styrofoam packaging materials are also accepted for a small fee.

The amount of garbage we produce in North America is staggering, adds Hetherington, but it doesn't have to be that way. Recycling is just one part of the solution (which also includes reducing, reusing and rethinking) towards becoming what she calls "a zero waste" community, which could shrink our waste by 90 per cent. The first step is to take responsibility for our trash, including our recycling products. Sustainable depots are looking for even more creative and local ways to repurpose recycled materials via emerging green industries.

"Now more than ever, we have to embrace the notion of going local, and that also means how we deal with our waste," notes Hetherington. This is especially important on the Sunshine Coast, where ferries and transportation (time, monetary and environmental costs) also factor in to waste management.

The recycling biz is certainly demanding, but not without its perks. There are all kinds of treasures that come in disguised as waste, and usable items are made available to patrons or collected and donated to local charities. The other plus is meeting good people determined to make a difference.

"It's especially wonderful to see young children come in to recycle," notes Hetherington with a wide smile. "Along with their parents, they have a real sense of caring and concern and want to do something positive."

A visit to the recycling depot is a good lesson that what we consume and throw away is our personal responsibility and has an impact on the planet. Luckily, thanks to folks like Boyd and Hetherington, we have a choice in how we handle it.

Gibsons Recycling Depot is located at 1018 Venture Way, Gibsons. It's open every day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; call 604-740-1425. For more information, valuable tips and links, see gibsonsrecycling.ca.

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