

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

How many times have we heard this saying? For me it was a phrase that didn't have much impact until about four years ago. I took a step back and thought to myself, "If I am not part of the solution, I am part of the problem." Since then I have been actively trying to improve my family's impact on the environment. When recycling gets brought up in conversation, people often just don't know what resources are available in the community. This is what encouraged me to write this article. Not only is knowledge power, it is also necessary for action.

Recycle! Otsego County is a non-profit organization sponsored by Kam's Towing. It is run by volunteers and fueled by individual donations. While many areas in Michigan have recycling built into their tax structure, Otsego County does not. This is why it is so important for us to remember to donate a few dollars when we take in our recyclables. The facility, located east of Old 27 South behind the Stampede Saloon, is open Wednesdays 5 to 7 pm and Saturdays 10 am to 2 pm. The following is a list of items that are accepted for recycling:

Corrugated cardboard – Clean pizza boxes, moving boxes, etc. Please flatten.

Paper - Magazines, newspaper, office paper, junk mail, telephone books, shredded paper. No need to separate by type.

Plastic bottles or jugs – Number 1 or 2 only. Rinse out and remove caps and rings. Note: the type of plastic can be determined by looking at the triangle imprinted in each item. Volunteers can show you how to sort your items. Please flatten milk jugs—it makes room for more in each container.

Steel and aluminum cans – Rinsed and labels removed. The facility also accepts TV dinner trays, aluminum foil, aluminum ladders, lawn chairs, screen doors, etc.

Brown paper bags

What to do with items Recycle Otsego County does not accept?

Glass – Accepted in other cities and counties. On your next trip to Traverse City or Petoskey be sure to take your glass items for recycling—just look for the signs to the recycling centers. They also accept plastic types that we do not. Clear glass is accepted at the Grayling transfer station on North Down River Road off I-75.

Plastic bags – Walmart accepts these.

Electronics – Electronics in good working order can be donated to Otsego County Habitat ReStore or Goodwill. Non-working electronics are accepted at Best Buy and Staples locations for recycling.

Fiberboard – accepted at the Grayling transfer station on North Down River Road off I-75.

CDs – Best Buy



Cell phones – cellular phone dealers or Cell Phones for Soldiers

Motor oil – Advance Auto, AutoZone

Printer cartridges – Dunn's Business Solutions and OfficeMax. Many manufacturers offer postpaid recycling.

Batteries – Do not put batteries into a landfill! This includes those little batteries in the musical greeting cards. Alkaline batteries are accepted at Advance Auto and RadioShack. Rechargeable batteries are accepted at Lowe's and Home Depot.

CFLs (Compact Fluorescent Lamps) – There currently isn't a facility in the area accepting CFLs, but they shouldn't go into landfills because of the mercury they contain. You can order consumer recycling kits from <http://www.sylvania.com/Recycle/CFLandHouseholdLightBulbrecycling/>.

Bulky Styrofoam – accepted at the Grayling transfer station on North Down River Road off I-75.

Styrofoam packing "peanuts": Our local PacMail store at 621 Main Street, Gaylord, cheerfully accepts these.

The best resource is www.earth911.com. It allows you to search by item and location to see what facilities exist. Better yet, scroll through the items list to get ideas of what else can be recycled that you would normally throw out. The best way to decrease the amount of time you spend recycling is to reduce the amount of trash you generate. Compost your food scraps; use cloth napkins; and buy locally grown produce. Get creative and remember it is possible to have less than a bag of garbage each month. It just takes thoughtful purchasing and conservation.

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact me at owasik@yahoo.com.

Submitted by Olivia Wasik who has lived in Michaywé for two years along with husband, Ryan, and six month old son, Casimir.



Left to right:
Recycle Otsego County volunteers
Suzanne Stewart,
Michaywé resident
Carolyn Wessel,
Kam Ensing,
Tom Lancaster
and Phil Alexander