



Indiana County Sustainable Economic Development Task Force Monthly Newsletter

CRACKING DOWN ON HOLIDAY WASTE: Four Ways to Help Your Community & Avoid Landfills This Season!

Every December, generosity fills the air here in Indiana County. But as good will and generosity becomes more abundant, so too does trash. Have no fear! Read below to find out how your holiday waste can be used to help a charity, a cause, or our local farmers!

1. Donate Your Plastic Bags Help Evergreen Conservancy bring more park benches to the community! For every 500lbs of bubble wrap, grocery bags, bread bags, case overwrap, dry cleaning bags, ice bags, Ziplock / resealable bags, and cereal bags they collect, they receive one park bench from the TREX® Recycling Program to donate to our community. Their efforts will expand throughout the County in 2020, but a collection bin is available 24/7 during the holiday season in the entry of the Indiana Borough building.

2. Give Fabric a 3rd or 4th Life! There are several second hand stores located throughout the county in addition to Goodwills, Salvation Army drop off sites, and other charities which accept second hand clothing for resale or donation. These sites oftentimes only accept "Gently Used" items, leaving not-so-gently used items in the trash. If you can't find a purpose for that fabric at home, Local zero-waste advocate Devon Ruby (see below) will gladly take it off your hands! She is collecting fabric scrapes and old clothing to produce reusable bags that will be handed out for free in the spring to raise awareness on plastic waste.

Local Creates Buyers Club: Is Now Collecting Spare Fabric

Devon Ruby, who lives in Ford City and works in Indiana Borough, was first introduced to dietary health and minimalism through her work as a massage therapist. Her decisions on what to buy or bring into her life became very intentional as she strives to establish a healthier lifestyle for her and her family. Now expanding her efforts to the community, she has established a buying club, which will allow groups of people to order locally produced goods in bulk. This style of purchasing makes the products more affordable while also generating less packaging waste. It is her hope that this buying club will soon expand into a bulk food store, which she would locate in Indiana County. In addition to this effort, she will be collecting any scraps of fabric, used clothing, or old sheets, to produce reusable shopping bags. Ruby would then pass these bags out for free at local farmers markets to raise awareness on plastic waste. Using old fabric to make reusable bags is more sustainable than purchasing a new reusable bag in the store, as it prevents the old fabric from going into the landfill, and does not require more materials to be produced or shipped.

4. Compost Your Food Scraps Are your dinner guests paying more attention to their cookies than their vegetables? Consider throwing leftover veggies and fruit in your garden before tossing them in the trash. Don't have a compost bin? Take all your leftovers and paper to Leap Farm. They accept food scraps (including meat!) and paper (especially shredded paper) for compost year-round. Contact Russ Leap by phone at 724-493-7261. Starting in March, Mother Earth Farm PA will also accept composting materials.

4. Recycle Old String Lights Are you considering switching out your old incandescent string lights with more energy efficient LEDs? Have your old string lights fallen into disrepair? Instead of tossing them in the trash, visit christmas-light-source.com and send them your old lights in exchange for coupons! In addition to providing you with coupons, Christmas Light Source donates proceeds to Toys for Tots every December (McLendon, 2019). Holiday LEDs, Environmental LED, and other companies offer similar programs. Don't want the hassle of the online stores? Try dropping them off at our local Indiana Lowes Service Desk. Though they do not participate in any official recycling program, when asked they said, "Yeah, we'll take 'em!"

Find links to the businesses mentioned here at: <http://sustainableindianacounty.org/resources/>

According to Stanford University (n.d.), America's trash production increases by 25% between Thanksgiving and New Year's. By repurposing and recycling, we can help reduce the nation's waste.

Sources:
McLendon, R., & Hickman, M. (2019, December 11). How to recycle your Christmas lights. Retrieved December 16, 2019, from Mother Nature Network: https://www.mnn.com/your-home/at-home/blogs/swap-and-save-the-home-depots-christmas-light-trade-in-event?utm_source=Weekly+Newsletter&utm_campaign=86d5691b2a-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_FRI1213_2019&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fcbff2e256-86d5691b2a-42143629

Stanford. (n.d.). Frequently Asked Questions: Holiday Waste Prevention. Retrieved December 19, 2019, from Stanford.edu: <https://lbre.stanford.edu/pssistanford-recycling/frequently-asked-questions/frequently-asked-questions-holiday-waste-prevention>

Got Spare Fabric?
Contact Devon Ruby at rubydevon16@gmail.com or Molly Sarver at sustainableindianacounty@gmail.com to arrange drop off or pick-up.