2015 Excellence Award Entry
Educational Program
Waste Management
Mary Evans
mevans4@wm.com | 425.814.7844
WM Recycle Corps Program
Washington; King, Skagit, and Snohomish Counties
Population: 2,959,915
$5.61 per household
Budget: $235,000 per year
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Waste Management’s (WM) Recycle Corps program is an intensive 11-week hands-on job training internship that teaches college students the latest strategies in effectively engaging the public and businesses in waste reduction and recycling behavior change. The program is designed to provide students authentic experiences in the field as recycling educators. Individuals work in teams, directly with business owners and staff, property managers and residents, and one-on-one with the public to provide recycling and waste reduction education. This program has been an incubator for the recycling industry, with 17 of the 36 Recycle Corps team alumni now working as professionals in the industry for private companies, the public sector, and consulting firms. Over the course of three years, the Recycle Corps team has conducted more than 48,000 customer conversations which has resulted in an increase in recycling tons by 3,532.

STATEMENT OF INTENT
WM’s Recycle Corps program was launched in 2012, providing education to two audiences:

1. **College Students:** Interns who receive hands-on job training and learn to implement the latest strategies in effectively engaging the public and businesses in waste reduction and recycling behavior change.

2. **Recycling Program Participants:** The interns work with businesses, multifamily properties, and the public in 26 cities, across three counties, to implement behavior change that improves recycling habits and reduces waste.

Going into year four, the Recycle Corps program has a total of 36 alumni, 17 of which are now working as professionals in the recycling and waste prevention industry for private companies, the public sector, and consulting firms. In three years, the Recycle Corps team has had 48,000 customer conversations which resulted in improved recycling rates. The achieved results and impact on customers inspires this submission for the Recycle Corps program for SWANA’s Educational Program Excellence Award.
RESEARCH AND PLANNING

The Need
Despite 30+ years of curbside recycling in the Puget Sound region of Washington State, annual improvements in the recycling rate had been slowing, and in some cities, the recycling rate had plateaued. Through waste characterization studies, King County and the City of Seattle consistently found opportunities for diversion in the garbage thrown away by residents and businesses. Consistently, the garbage contained 30% compostable materials and 20% percent recyclable paper.

Additionally, there is a need to recruit passionate recycling and solid waste educators, as many seasoned professionals are within 10-15 years of retirement. There is an opportunity for training and developing a solid youth population to recruit professionals from.

Program Development
To meet both needs – improve the recycling rate in the Puget Sound region, and train the next generation of passionate recycling educators – Candy Castellanos, WM’s Senior Manager of Public Education & Outreach, created the Recycle Corps program using her background in environmental education and the standards and methodologies of Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM).

The Recycle Corps program was developed to maximize the number of people who could be reached within an annual cycle by inspiring, motivating, and empowering individuals to maximize their engagement in existing recycling, composting, and waste prevention programs. The Recycle Corps program was developed as a multi-faceted opportunity for not only residents and businesses, but also environmental science students to get comprehensive training opportunities and hands-on job experience in the field of recycling outreach. The Recycle Corps team works with 26 cities in the Puget Sound region, each with its own waste prevention plan and goals to achieve, yet working with limited resources available to reach all residents.

The Recycle Corps program meets customers where they are, at community events, businesses, and multifamily residential properties, to provide one-one-one engagement to educate residents and businesses on proper recycling and to change behaviors to improve recycling habits. One-on-one engagement is the core principal of CBSM, found to be the most effective way to engage people, create awareness, and change behaviors.

The Recycle Corps program also serves as an incubator for finding and developing future leaders within the solid waste industry. Most of the Recycle Corps team alumni are now working in the industry.
Resources and Materials Used
Planning for the Recycle Corps program began in January 2012. As a new program, all materials for public education and intern training had to be developed from scratch. Prior to the program’s implementation, city and county recycling guides mailed to residents and businesses were the primary means of educating the public on what could be recycled and composted in the region.

Target Audience
The Recycle Corps program was developed to reach two target audiences, college students nationwide who are passionate about sustainability and the environment, and recycling program participants (single-family residents, multifamily residents and property managers, and businesses) in the Puget Sound area.

The intent of the program is to provide college students with comprehensive training and hands-on job experience so they can be effective recycling educators with the skills to successfully engage the public and businesses in waste reduction and recycling behavior change. The Recycle Corps interns have helped to expand the great work already being done in the industry, and provided Puget Sound cities and counties with an opportunity to accomplish – through expanded capacity—more in the recycling industry. Implementing the Recycle Corps program requires a critical mass of experts ready to help contribute to that work.

Castellanos’ personal goal in this program was to help people discover how rich and diverse the industry is, discover how they can have an impact, and build a team of professionals that are capable of making a difference within the region and beyond. Castellanos was inspired by the Peace Corps and Earth Corps and determined there was a need for a program focused on recycling and composting education. With national interest in sustainability growing, and an increase in the number of formal sustainability and environment science college degrees, there was an opportunity to build an incubator of future professionals passionate and ready to enter the field of recycling education.

After a week-long, forty-hour training program, the Recycle Corps team is ready to launch and work as recycling experts and ambassadors. The Recycle Corps team work directly with business owners and staff, property managers and residents, and the public, providing recycling and waste reduction education. The Recycle Corps team members use their training, knowledge, and passion to implement effective recycling education campaigns and share educational materials with the public through one-on-one conversations at events, businesses, and multifamily properties and provide detailed information about what resources are available in communities.
In the second year of the program (2013), WM added a third target audience for the program: the WM public education outreach team. These internal recycling educators were given professional development opportunities as intern Leads to gain experience in supervising and leadership.

Program Goals, Objectives, and Tactics

The goals and objectives of the Recycle Corps program were designed to be specific, measurable, attainable, and relevant within the 11-week internship timeframe. The Recycle Corps program runs from the second week of June through the last week of August each year. The following are the goals for the Recycle Corps program:

- Hire 10-12 interns yearly to be part of the Recycle Corps
- Provide hands-on job training that will prepare interns to enter the recycling industry as education and outreach professionals
- Execute 10-15 city-wide recycling education campaigns
- Staff between 90-100 event days with the WM Recycling Information Station
- Connect one-on-one with individuals to remove barriers for participating in recycling and composting programs
- Provide educational materials on proper recycling methods
- Increase the recycling rate and tons of materials recycled in the Puget Sound area
- Reduce the amount of recyclables and compost landfilled

In order to accomplish these goals, Castellanos worked tirelessly in year one to develop a week-long intensive training session, create training materials from scratch, develop partnerships with recycling industry experts to participate in the training session, coordinate a ride-along with drivers and tours of recycling and compost facilities, and hire qualified applicants.

Over the course of the program, WM has worked with two recruiters to conduct a highly competitive professional application process. Between 2012 and 2015, 829 applicants have applied from top universities across the country. To date Recycle Corps has included students attending Cascadia Community College, Chapman University, Claremont McKenna College, Colorado University, Eastern Washington University, Georgetown University, Grays Harbor College, Northwest University, Santa Clara University, Seattle University, Stanford University, University of California Berkeley, University of California Los Angeles, University of Pacific, University of Washington, University of Washington Bothell, and Western Washington University.
As part of the Recycle Corps program, WM developed the following materials:

- Training Workbooks
- The WM Recycling Information Station interactive education booth
- A recycling brochure with information including recycling mythbusters, preparation tips, and an overview of how recycling works
- Informational handouts, including:
  - Going Green Is Easy brochure for each of the 26 cities that explain the recycling education materials and services available to residents and businesses
  - Move In/Move Out brochure provides multifamily property managers and residents reuse and recycling guidelines for materials that are common when moving
  - “Four Rs” children’s coloring book that engages and educates children on proper recycling methods and provides waste prevention and reuse tips
  - Recycled Crafts flyer
  - Newspaper Origami Activity flyer
- City-specific outreach materials for 15 recycling education campaigns including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Auburn Multifamily Canvas</td>
<td>1. Auburn Commercial Canvas</td>
<td>1. Auburn Multifamily Canvas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Renton Commercial Canvas</td>
<td>12. Tukwila Commercial Canvas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Tukwila Commercial Canvas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Tukwila Multifamily Canvas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For each city-specific recycling education campaign, the Recycle Corps team hosted a launch event with the city’s solid waste staff on the first day of the campaign to run through the goals for the campaign and each city’s individual goals and needs.

**Obstacles for Meeting the Goals**

There are traditional challenges to educational outreach including:

- Rarely do private companies and municipalities have the staff capacity to connect with all residents and businesses individually
- Regional differences between recycling programs; there is a lot of nuance between cities to learn about service offerings
- The ability to reach the multicultural communities effectively

The Recycle Corps program enables companies and municipalities to reach more people one-on-one, where people are making most of their recycling and composting decisions. To ensure businesses and multifamily residents were reached at the best times, the Recycle Corps team experimented with sending notices of visits via direct mail, calling to schedule appointments ahead of time, and dropping in unannounced. It was determined the best tactic for the Recycle Corps team was to stop by and conduct conversations with businesses unannounced.

The Recycle Corps team is currently working to address the challenge of reaching multicultural communities. As part of the recruiting process, WM is actively looking for interns who can effectively engage with residents who speak different languages. The Recycle Corps team and WM have also added a Spanish version of the Recycling Information Station that is being set up at Puget Sound-area Hispanic community events.

**Opportunities for Meeting the Goals**

The Recycle Corps program has a great opportunity for growth in the number of residents who can be reached. In 2014, within a 10-week timeframe, the Recycle Corps team reached 19,000 residents through interactions with individuals (adults and children) at community events, business visits, and multifamily visits with property managers and residents.

As mentioned in the obstacles above, there is an increased focus on reaching multicultural and English-language learner populations effectively. Adding multicultural outreach elements offer an opportunity to grow the program’s reach in terms of the number of people reached and the cultures that are engaged in recycling and composting behaviors.
IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION

Program Implementation – Annual Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WM approves the creation of Recycle Corps</td>
<td>February 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Planning:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Outline the program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recruit interns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop intern training materials</td>
<td>January - May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop the week-long training session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate participation paperwork for Puget Sound area events</td>
<td>January - May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop public outreach material</td>
<td>January - March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop WM Recycling Information Station</td>
<td>February - March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop campaigns and outreach schedule</td>
<td>February - May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create recycling education campaign schedule</td>
<td>February - May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire the interns</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct the week-long intensive training session</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct public outreach</td>
<td>June – August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program evaluation</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every Tuesday morning throughout the 11-week internship, the Recycle Corps team would meet with the WM staff to debrief on the previous week and “pre-brief” on the coming week. It was a time for individuals to share what they learned and ask questions.

Program Activities used to Achieve Goals

The top level goals of the Recycle Corps program are 1) to provide interns with hands-on job training to become recycling educators, and 2) engage the public in proper recycling methods and change behaviors to increase recycle rates. As such, the activities involved in the program align with that.

The Recycle Corps team goes through an intense one-week training period where they learn about the foundation of what is recyclable and compostable in each city and county in the Puget Sound region. Their training week also includes interactive workshops on public speaking, how to conduct multifamily outreach, how to conduct business outreach, how to develop strong messages, CBSM basics, and effective, and engaging outreach strategies. Each workshop offered during the training week includes role play, and the interns have the opportunity to hear about programs happening at the regional level including product stewardship, waste prevention programs, like the One Less Bag Challenge in King County. Participants also ride along with a WM driver and take tours of local recycling and compost facilities. At the end of the week, the group is trained and ready to conduct public outreach as official recycling ambassadors.

Throughout the program, the Recycle Corps team receive hands-on experience in leveraging the effective public engagement strategies they learn, and incorporating their knowledge of recycling into the development of engaging conversations with the public. Interns also use that knowledge to execute campaigns that reach the public and motivate behavior change including:
• **Multifamily Outreach**, providing property managers with a toolkit which includes the Going Green is Easy and Move In/Move Out brochures, and sample materials. The Recycle Corps team also provides property managers with a visual waste audit to determine their recycling needs and where there might be issues, offers to go door-to-door to have individual conversations with residents, provides recycling workshops to residents, and conducts service reviews to determine the right size containers needed on the property. For example, Sixty 01 South in Redmond, WA asked the Recycle Corps team to have individual conversations with each of its 770 residential units on proper recycling methods.

• **Business Outreach**, providing local businesses with a toolkit which includes the Going Green is Easy, sample materials in different languages, sorting station posters, and details on how to start a recycling and composting program. The Recycle Corps team also provides businesses with a visual waste audit of carts and containers to ensure the business’ needs are met, and staff training on proper recycling and composting methods.

• **Community Engagement**, the Recycle Corps team spends 30 percent of their time staffing community events for 90-100 event days in all 26 cities WM works with in the Puget Sound region. Specifically for community events and farmers markets, WM designed the Recycling Information Station, an interactive educational booth for recycling outreach at community fairs, farmers markets and festivals. The signature Recycling Information Station is a hands-on interactive educational booth where customers of all ages can increase their recycling and composting knowledge, ask questions about waste reduction and pick-up recycling guidelines, as well as information about community recycling resources and Household Hazardous Waste disposal information.

During year one, the Recycle Corps team used the Recycling Information Station to survey customers about what information they need and what they are confused about, to tailor the Information Station toward the communities’ recycling education and information needs. The survey of 800 people found many residents are confused about what can’t be recycled, particularly plastic items. That information helped shape the Recycling Information Station into what it provides customers currently, including:
• **Two informational banner sets,** one set that shows where garbage, recyclables and compost goes in the region; and the second banner set includes images that serve as prompts to trigger common questions residents have about common and hard-to-recycle items such as CFL bulbs, e-waste and batteries.

• **Upcycled and recycled craft project ideas,** a fun way to teach residents different ways to re-use material to create beautiful products.

• **Recycling games and sustainable prizes** draws kids and adults in to the booth to win prizes and learn about recycling in the process. Games include:
  - Recycle Relay
  - Plinko Bingo
  - Wheel o’ Waste
  - Sort it Out
  - Recycled Crafts

The booth utilizes an "L" shaped layout, with the main table at the back so as to encourage visitors to move through the booth between an activity station for kids and teens, and a hands-on information station for adults. This provides a unique opportunity for customers to ask questions directly of trained staff and gather the latest tools and resources for increasing recycling and composting. Meeting customers where they are, WM’s engaging education booth increased the accessibility of recycling information and complimented ongoing community-based outreach efforts.

**Project Budget**

The operating budget for the Recycle Corps program, which does not including WM staff wages for program and staff management, is $235,000 each year, with a significant portion of the budget allocated to paying the Recycle Corps team of interns at $13 per hour and reimbursing the full IRS rate for mileage. In 2015, WM is spending an additional $8,000 to fund iPads and GPS devices to use in the program.

The yearly cost of the program is equivalent to four full time outreach specialists at WM. By utilizing the funds for the Recycle Corps program, WM is able to reach more residents and increase education opportunities, having a regional impact on more than 19,000 residents. In addition to that the added outreach capacity this program allows, the program also results in trained professionals who are prepared to enter the recycling industry and have an immediate impact beyond the Puget Sound region.
**Partnerships**

Partnerships are a key element to the success of the Recycle Corps program. Partners participate in the intensive training session during week one, training students with their expertise in different fields of public engagement. This is vital to effectively preparing the Recycle Corps team members to effectively execute public outreach campaigns in the following ten weeks of the internship, and gain the experience needed to become successful professionals in the field following graduation.

Recycle Corps Program Partners:

- Environmental Coalition of South Seattle
- King County
- Snohomish County
- Cascadia Consulting
- C+C | PR & Social Marketing
- TD Wang
- Cities in King, Skagit, and Snohomish Counties (26 in total)
- WM Operations Team (Route Managers, District Managers, Drivers)
- HopeLink
- Washington State Recycling Association

**A Unique Approach and Program Achievements**

As a direct result of the Recycle Corps program, Waste Management and the 26 cities working with the Recycle Corps teams have seen remarkable results. In just seven cities that worked with Recycle Corps teams over the past three years, WM has documented an increase in recycling tons by 3,532, which translates to more than seven million pounds of recyclables diverted from the landfill.

This program is unique in that it has achieved a large improvement in recycling among Puget Sound area residents; but also, over the past three years, there has been an increase in recycling knowledge among residents, businesses, and multifamily property managers and residents, who year-over-year, have less questions and are less confused about how maximize their participation in local recycling, composting and waste prevention programs.

Equally unique and important is that of the 36 students who have participated in the Recycle Corps program: 17 of them are currently working as professionals in the recycling and waste prevention industry for private companies, the public sector, and consulting firms.

**RESULTS AND EVALUATION**

**Target Audience Response**

The Recycle Corps program continues to receive positive responses from both interns who were part of the Recycle Corps teams, the cities who have worked with the Recycle Corps teams, and the residents who have engaged with the Recycle Corps teams, many of whom have shared “Thank you, I always wondered about that!” feedback. In an effort to ensure the program is valuable to the students, WM debriefs and conducts a survey with each student in the middle of the program, and following the completion of the program.
“Over the summer I had the incredible opportunity of working as a recycling education and outreach intern with Waste Management. Through this process, I engaged with business owners, multifamily property managers, and individual citizens with the goal of helping them improve their existing waste practices and providing needed information to help ease the confusion that comes with recycling in Washington. I was able to engage with individuals from over fifteen different cities and with this came the opportunity to hear a range of views on our waste system, meeting each person at their comfort level to try and find solutions to their waste difficulties. Through speaking with so many diverse people, networking with a broad range of professionals, and extensive training, I learned how impactful the waste system is on our community, and how much of a difference it can make providing just a small amount of education on recycling. It was here that I found a new passion.”

– Holly (Recycle Corps 2014)

“This summer internship with Waste Management was such an amazing and unique experience. I learned far more than I had ever expected to learn about such an important industry and developed and improved upon many interpersonal skills that I was able to use every single day this summer and will forever use. I cannot thank Candy, Joel, and Michelle enough for this experience and I am so happy that I did it!”

– Erika (Recycle Corps 2014)

“I was recently hired as the summer Community Relations intern for King County’s Wastewater Treatment Division, it involves a lot of community outreach work and they were so impressed with my background and experience from having done similar work at WM that they called me the next day to offer me the job! I was just talking with another student here about how much the Recycle Corps internship has impacted my career path and provided me with such awesome training-- you were so inspirational as well :)

– Jordan (Recycle Corps 2013)

“For the past two years, the City of Tukwila was fortunate to host motivated and professional college interns as part of Waste Management’s Recycle Corps Program. Following intense and comprehensive training from Waste Management Staff, the Recycle Corps were deployed to Tukwila with the goal of providing valuable education and outreach for the Tukwila community with emphasis on assisting businesses meet recycling goals. I had an opportunity to “shadow” several of Waste Management’s Recycle Corps and the work they accomplished in Tukwila had been amazing! These young professionals conducted waste audits, engaged the public during community events, promoted sustainability and provided information and support to businesses regarding recycling and waste diversion/reduction. Their efforts in providing comprehensive business recycling guides and following up with requests from businesses contributed to the marked increase in businesses in Tukwila that now have recycling services. Through their engagement with the public during community events and involvement in providing comprehensive residential recycling guides, more residents are now aware of the recycling opportunities
Waste Management’s Recycle Corps is a valuable resource for our community. It is an innovative program that helps achieve our sustainable goals and provides training and experience for future leaders of America”.
– Frank Iriarte (City of Tukwila, WA)

“In 2013, we worked with Recycle Corps at Woodridge Park Apartments to increase recycling among residents. As a team effort with King County Housing Authority, Recycle Corps went door-to-door at this 200+ unit apartment complex, to educate residents on recycling. Within just a few months, we documented an increase in recycling and a savings of almost $20,000 annually through decreased garbage costs.”
– Jenna Higgins (King County Housing Authority)

Measured Success
Since the beginning of the Recycle Corps program, setting measurable goals that demonstrate impact has been a high priority. Over the program’s three years, goals and results are as follows:

**Goal:** Conduct 10-15 outreach campaigns  
**Result:** The Recycle Corps team executed 15 campaigns in 2012, 13 campaigns in 2013, and 10 campaigns in 2014.

**Goal:** Staff 90-100 event days at local farmers market, community fairs, and events  
**Result:** The Recycle Corps team, staffed 91 event days in 2012, 95 event days in 2013, and 96 event days in 2014.

**Goal:** Increase the amount of recyclable materials diverted from the landfill.  
**Result:** In the seven cities that worked with the Recycle Corps team each year for three years, WM has documented an increase in recycling tons by 3,532 which converts to more than seven million pounds of recyclables diverted from the landfill.

**Goal:** Increase the number of residents reached through one-on-one engagement  
**Result:** The Recycle Corps team reached 15,000 people in 2012, 14,000 people in 2013, and 19,000 people in 2014. Additionally, in 2014, Recycle Corps expanded outreach opportunities for the Spanish-speaking population in the Puget Sound region by creating a customized Spanish-language version of the signature Recycling Information Station for Fiestas Patrias, one of the prominent events for the Latino community. In three hours, the Recycle Corps team engaged more than 250 event attendees in one-on-one conversations about recycling.

**Goal:** Create an incubator for finding and developing future leaders within the solid waste industry  
**Result:** Of the 36 Recycle Corps alumni, 17 are currently working in the recycling and waste prevention field for private companies, the public sector, or consulting firms.

Future Possibilities
The achievements of the Recycle Corps program over the past three years have been inspiring, motivating future possibilities and opportunities for the program. The 2015 program will incorporate multicultural and multilingual communities, as WM is actively recruiting bi-lingual students to join the 2015 Recycle Corps team. In 2014 WM opened up its week-long intensive training session for the Recycle Corps to local organizations who wanted to gain training in recycling outreach. Twenty staff
from partner organizations participated, including multicultural outreach experts, from ECOSS, TD Wang and C+C.

**How to Replicate Recycle Corps**

The overall goal of Recycle Corps program is to have an impact on sustainability locally and beyond. WM staff in cities across the country has looked at the Recycle Corps program as a model for developing similar programs in other communities. To replicate the program, it is important to have a dedicated staff member who is willing to create high quality training and has the capacity to supervise and serve as a coach and mentor throughout the course of the program. Castellanos and her team are committed to expanding their impact and are pleased to share their knowledge, ideas, and programs with anyone interested in furthering the impact.

**SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL**
2015 SWANA Educational Program Excellence Award

STEPS TO RECYCLING SUCCESS
Recycling is an easy way to keep valuable natural resources out of the landfill, but recycling only works with your help.

To keep the recycling system healthy, follow these simple steps:

1. Is it recyclable?? Check your King County Recycling Guide.
   
   Yes! It’s on the list! Proceed to Step #2
   
   Don’t see it?
   
   email: recyclemm@wm.com
   call: 1-800-592-9995

2. Prepare your recyclables for new life:
   • Rinse or empty recyclables of all food and liquids
   • Separate newspaper from plastic delivery bag
   • Reduce bags, discard in the garbage or bring back to a grocery store for recycling
   • Remove plastic wrap and any packaging from cardboard
   • Place plastic wrap and foam packaging in garbage. Visit the Community Recycling Resources pages for foam reuse and recycle options
   • Button boxes

3. Do not put bagged recyclables into cart — empty out recyclables into cart loose
   Empty plastic bags Only in recycling cart; empty plastic bags go in the garbage or back to a grocery store for recycling

Thank you for doing your part to recycle right!

www.wmnorthwest.com/kingcounty

WHY CAN’T I RECYCLE EVERYTHING?

Recycling starts when you put the right stuff in your recycling cart.

Just because you put something in a recycling bin, it does not mean it can be turned into something new. When the wrong stuff goes in the bin, staff at the recycling center have to remove these items by hand, and throw them in the garbage.

For a recyclable item to be made into a new product, all of these things must be true:

✓ Preparation: Each recyclable item must be clean and empty of all debris, food or liquids.

✓ Separation: A recycling facility must be able to separate the item into its own material group so each type of item — cardboard, aluminum, tin, steel, paper, glass, plastic containers — can be properly distributed to the correct recycling service.

RECYCLING MYTH BUSTERS

MYTH: All plastics can be recycled.
FACT: Not all plastics can be successfully recycled. At this time only some plastics can be made into new things. Recycle plastics by shape – bottles, jugs, dairy tubs and caps.

MYTH: A recycling symbol stamped on plastic means it is recyclable.
FACT: There are thousands of plastic products and packaging, and each one has its own unique chemical recipe.
• The number only tells us what the primary ingredient is in the plastic recipe. Many plastics cannot be made into new products at this time.

MYTH: It doesn’t matter if something belongs in the recycling — the recycling center will sort everything anyway.
FACT: False.
• There is a lot of garbage sent to the recycling center, and each non-recyclable item is removed by hand by trained staff.
• Garbage placed in the recycling increases the cost of the recycling process and will increase the cost of garbage and recycling service.

Garbage and Other Things We Find in the Recycling
• Loose plastic bags
• Hose
• Light bulbs
• Needles
• Toys
• Hangers
• Straws
• Snack wrappers
• Cleaning wipes
• Food-sold containers and paper
• Non-recyclable plastic

We’re here to help!
When in doubt, check your Recycling Guide, call the Waste Management Customer Service Center or email recycling experts at recyclemm@wm.com.

www.wmnorthwest.com/kingcounty 1-800-592-9995