

Environmental Update



Bellaire Recycling Committee

December 2003



Keep Leaves Out of the Sewers

By Craig Bello

With the cold of fall descending upon Bellaire, so do millions of brown, red, and yellow leaves. And so begins the annual dance of the rakes and the tradition of leaf pile jumping. While raking the yard this year, please remember to dispose of leaves properly - collect them in garbage bags and put them by the curb. DO NOT put of collected leaves into the sewers! Masses of leaves can clog sewers and disturb stormwater drainage, not only increasing the likelihood of flooding in that area, but also wasting city funds through additional sewer maintenance.

The Bellaire Recycling Committee and the Department of Public Works asks you to hopefully go one step further. After collecting your leaves into plastic bags, please put them on the curb on the correct day for compost (grass and leaves) collection, rather than putting the bags out for collection of household trash. You can find out the correct day for compost collection for your location by visiting the City of Bellaire website at www.ci.bellaire.tx.us or by calling Todd Gross of the Department of Public Works at 713-662-8138.



Early Earth Day - Coming Soon Bellaire Celebrates Earth Day February 28th

By Gayle Davies

The Bellaire Recycling Committee will present its third annual Earth Day Festival on Saturday, February 28, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., at Whole Foods Market on Bellaire Blvd. More than 20 organizations and companies will have representatives available to talk to people about making earth-friendly choices in their daily lives.

Exhibitors will include the Nature Discovery Center, an organic gardener, alternative transportation vendors, clean-air advocates, a computer recycler,

state and local agencies, and many more. There will also be games, activities, projects, and other fun things for children. Whole Foods Market and Office Depot are partners in this event with the Bellaire Recycling Committee.

Special Assisted Drop-Off Date: December 27th, 2003

The Department of Public Works and Bellaire Recycling Committee will be hosting a special Assisted Drop-Off date on December 27th, 2003. This date provides a great opportunity to recycle the piles of cardboard boxes, wrapping paper, and greeting cards before the first opportunity to throw them away in the garbage.

Stemming the Junk Mail Epidemic

By Guyleene Ebersole

What do you do with all that junk mail once you receive it? The Bellaire Recycling Committee would prefer that it didn't end up in the landfill. One way to avoid this is to limit it before it arrives.

There is a federal 'opt-out' law that was passed in 2000 giving you the right to tell companies not to sell your name and address, preventing other companies from targeting you with junk mail. Unfortunately, the law was written in a way that allows financial institutions to hide notices of your rights in fine print.

Also, the post office requires bulk mailers, in

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order to get the lowest bulk rate, to mail to 100% of the addresses on a carrier route list. For a small fee, the post office will round out a bulk mailer's list as long as they compile at least 90% of the addresses. Since each mail carrier prepares a sheet of all addresses on their route every 90 days to be included in the master list in Atlanta, you couldn't get permanently removed. Your name and address would be back on the list in 90 days, when updates are provided to the bulk mailer from the master list.

Actions you can take:

1) Contact anyone who sends you a bill, organizations to which you belong, etc. and tell them not to release your name, address, social security number, email address or phone number to anyone else for marketing, mailing, or promotional purposes. This is the best way to use the 2000 law.

2) Contact the following organizations that will help to reduce your junk mail deliveries:

Stop Junk Mail Association
3020 Bridgeway #150
Sausalito, CA 94965
1-800-827-5549

Mail Preference Service
Direct Marketing Association
P.O. Box 9008
Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008

National opt-Out Center
P.O. Box 97328
Jackson, MS 39288-7328

3) Write a letter expressing your dissatisfaction with junk mail policies to:

- Your local Postmaster at your local post office and ask them to forward your comments to their superiors (call 800-275-8777 or go to www.usps.com for more info.
- The U.S. Postal Service Consumer Affairs Department at:
Consumer Affairs Policy & Program
Development
USPS – HQ
475 Lenfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20260-0004
- Your senators and representatives

- The Government Reform Committee, which oversees the U.S. Postal Service, at:

Government Reform Committee
Room 2157
Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20525

4) Make junk mail more expensive for the junk mailer. When a junk mailer includes a postage-paid envelope, send it back with a message do drop you from their mailing list, thus increasing the cost of sending the junk mail. Remember to seal all the contents of the junk mail (minus any credit card application forms which should be shred) in the postage-paid envelope because heavier mail is more expensive. This technique has an added bonus of keeping the junk mail out of our garbage. (Cont'd on page 3)

Mulch Your Christmas Tree

The Department of Public Works is once again offering the Christmas tree chipping service. Please drop off your Christmas tree, completely undecorated, at the Department of Public Works building (corner of Edith and Baldwin) between December 26th and January 3rd. You may drop off your tree outside of business hours by including it in the pile established outside the building.

Recycling Odds & Ends

By Craig Bello

Whenever the Recycling Committee finds new reducing, recycling, or reusing options for items that usually go into the garbage collection, we like to pass them along to encourage citizens to minimize throw away waste. Below is a list of some of our latest findings:

Syringes - In order to dispose of syringes and other sharp objects safely, please consider placing them in an impenetrable container (e.g., coffee can, laundry detergent bottle, etc.). Once secured, they can be put out with regular household trash.

#6 Plastics - Formed EPS (Expanded Polystyrene - a.k.a. Styrofoam™) packing material can be recycled at Houston Foam Plastics (1822 Maury) located off McKee/Hardy Exit of I-45 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Monday through Friday. The EPS is ground

and mixed with virgin raw materials to produce new EPS.

Packing “peanuts” can be reused by taking them to The UPS Store at 5116 Bissonnet (near HEB). Of course you could always reuse them at home in the next package you ship, by simply storing them in a bag until you need them.

Appliances - When replacing a large appliance (e.g., refrigerator, water heater, washer, dryer, etc.), please consider other options for disposing of the old unit rather than household trash. Working appliances can be donated to any number of charities or churches for distribution to the needy. Furthermore, they could easily be sold or given away through a free listing on the “houston.forsale” internet newsgroup.

For non-functioning old appliances, try to include removal and disposal of the old appliance in the deal for purchase of the new unit. With a simple request, many companies will cart away your old appliance when they deliver the new one.

If you have knowledge or ideas for additional reduction, reuse, or recycling options, please email them to the Bellaire Recycling Committee at RecyclingCommittee@BellaireRecycles.org and maybe you will see them get published in a future newsletter and on the website.

Stemming the Junk Mail Epidemic (Continued from Page 2)

Some facts about junk mail waste:

- It is difficult to recycle because the inks have high concentrations of heavy metals.
- \$320 million of local taxes are used to dispose of junk mail each year.
- Each family gets about 40 pounds of junk mail per year, more than a tree’s worth.
- 100 million trees are ground up each year to produce junk mail.
- 28 billion gallons of water are used each year for paper processing linked to junk mail.
- More than half of junk mail is discarded unread or unopened.
- The average response rate to junk mail offers is less than 2%, and produces around 4 million tons of paper waste each year.
- It costs around \$550 million yearly to transport junk mail.

Another way to reduce the overall amount of mail is to pay bills online. This one is simple and cheap. Almost all banks offer this service today an online bill paying service and most of them are free. If your bank does not provide online bill paying as a free service, many bills can be paid directly at the website of the vendor.

Once online bill payment is set up (whether through your bank or individual vendor websites), you can request no paper or mailed bill. You can receive automatic email reminders when bills are due and view your bills online (and print them out if you must). Paying bills online saves on postage and prevents payments from being late due to slow mail periods because you can usually set up the payment for a future date up as soon as you receive the online bill. If you wish to forget totally about having to make on-time payments, you can set up automatic withdrawals on your bills.

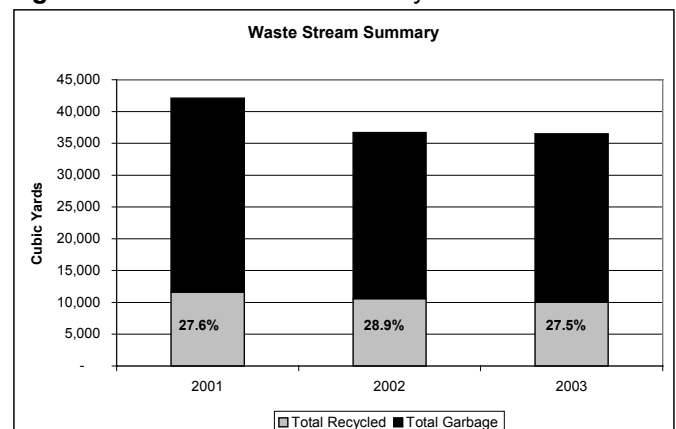
Fiscal 2003 Results

By Craig Bello

The 2003 fiscal year (October 1, 2002 through September 30, 2003) demonstrates, once again, the power the voluntary recyclers of Bellaire have over the city’s waste stream. Recycling efforts dramatically reduce the amount of waste dumped in area landfills and do so with significant savings to the city.

Over the last three years, the overall amount of waste generated by Bellaire decreased by over 5,600 cubic yards or 13.3% (see Figure 1). Despite the reduction in the total waste stream, the percentage of the waste stream recycled (or composted) has remained about the same - between 27.5 and 28.9%.

Figure 1 - Waste Stream Summary



Although the cubic yards of recycled materials stayed roughly the same from 2002 to 2003, the bottom-line profitability of the program increased by more than 84% over 2002. The two major reasons for the increased profitability are: 1) increased prices for some recycled materials and 2) increased cost per disposal trip avoided for composted yard waste. Figure 2 shows the summary for 2003.

Figure 2 – 2003 Recycling Program Financials

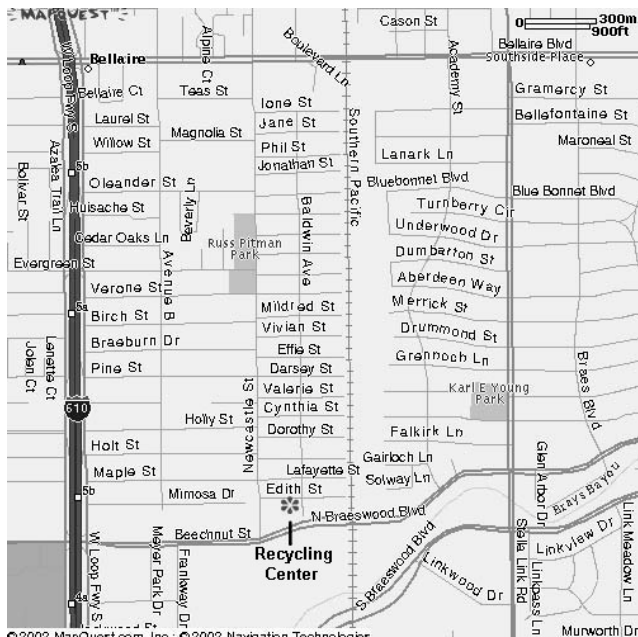
2003 Recycling Program Financials	
Total Revenue:	\$22,446.79
(Sales - paper, glass, aluminum, tin and plastic)	
Total Cost Avoidance:	\$63,993.99
(Savings from trip reductions and landfill costs)	
Total Operating Expenses:	(\$64,247.56)
(Labor, education and center maintenance)	
TOTAL:	\$22,193.21
(Revenues + Cost Avoidance - Expenses)	

**If you don't recycle, then you're
throwing it all away...**

Bellaire Recycling Center

4337 Edith

Open 7 Days a Week 8AM to 5 PM



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Bellaire Recycles! Online

The Bellaire Recycles! website is now available at www.bellairerecycles.org. Our new home will be a great source of information on "reduce, reuse, and recycle" concepts as well as the new hazardous waste voucher program. Please check it out and submit your comments and ideas to help it grow!

Bellaire Recycling Committee

Patricia King-Ritter	Chairperson
Craig Bello	Vice Chair / Editor
Dr. Gayle Davies	Education
Frances Freeman	Volunteer Coordinator
Elaine Lange	Secretary
Meg Healy	Committee Member
Terry Timme	Committee Member
Veronica Mullen	Committee Member
Guyleene Ebersole	Committee Member

Hotline: 713-662-8173 or
RecyclingCommittee@bellairerecycles.org
 Monthly meetings: 1st Wednesday, 6:30 PM, Parks and Recreation Center - All are welcome.

Don't forget to CRUSH!

- ⇒ Plastic Containers
- ⇒ Aluminum Cans
- ⇒ Cardboard Boxes

Special Thanks to:

- Our Volunteers
- Whole Foods Market-Bellaire
- Office Depot

In helping with our First Saturday Assisted Pickups and other Programs!

Next Assisted Pick-up/Drop-off Dates:

December 27, 2003 - Special Christmas Assisted Drop-off Date **Only**

January 3, 2004	March 6, 2004
February 7, 2004	April 3, 2004