

Recycling Made Easy

I hate recycling.

If anyone had told me 30 years ago that someday I'd be digging through my potential trash every week to pull out specific papers, plastics, metals and glass, I'd have told them they were crazy. This is why we call it "trash."

Fast forward to 2011, where (sure enough) nothing goes to the landfill that doesn't have to. Recycling is one of those things we just do, like brushing our teeth, cleaning out the cat's litter box and rebuilding the worn-out electric motors in our overused marital aid devices. It's not fun but it has to be done.

This being the case, my goal is to minimize the hassle involved. The result is that I save my recyclables until there is no more space in the basement. Fortunately, the City comes by every week to relieve me of several product groups, but the plastic bags, metals, clear glass and deposit cans and bottles accumulate alarmingly.

Last week, LuAnn insisted on being able to navigate in the basement without having to walk sideways through the towering stacks of recyclables, so I made a trip to John's with 18 cases of wine bottles. That's a fair amount of alcoholic detritus, but it's nothing compared to the 507 bottles I returned at one time in 2004.

That remains a modern John's record by the way, and it was achieved without benefit of hosting any large social events. I didn't have a vehicle large enough to hold it all so I had to browbeat Wally the Wine Guy into coming to my house with a pickup truck. Really, you can ask him.

Wine bottle recycling is easy compared to beer and pop can recycling, which I hate. Part of the problem is that I'm not particularly good about rinsing out my containers, so they fester discontentedly in our damp basement and conspire to achieve biohazard status.

Then I found out about the Iowa City A.M. Rotary Club's collection site for returnable cans and plastic bottles, which is located at City Carton's collection site at its headquarters on Benton Street. I can go there and toss the horrid things – I'm in and out in a few minutes. You can't miss the bin – there's a big sign that has the Rotary wheel logo on it. Take along your other odds and ends recycling as long as you're going.

The Can Shed – another local business - is also involved. It picks up the bottles and cans and stores them until they can get them counted. The business also accepts recyclables directly, so we can bring glass bottles as well as plastic and cans and donate them to the cause. Check out its facility at 611 Hollywood Boulevard just east of Orscheln Farm and Home Store.

Neither City Carton nor the Can Shed make a dime on this program. Similarly, A.M. Rotary has zero administrative expenses, so all proceeds directly benefit charitable organizations in our community.

Last year, A.M. Rotary received income of over \$12,000 thanks to the work done by these two local businesses (not to mention those of us who donated our deposit cans and bottles). The club uses these funds to support local projects like a freezer for the Crisis Center or medical supplies for the Free Medical Clinic. In addition, it helps fund a grassroots grant program that has supported a number of other local nonprofits.

If returning cans and bottles for the nickel deposit isn't one of your favorite activities, do yourself and our community a favor and take them to City Carton or the Can Shed. And let me know if you find a place to recycle worn out electric motors.

Dave Parsons is the Recycling Czar at the business he co-owns on the Coralville Strip, and a member of the Press Citizen Writers Group.