



RIDWELL MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

VILLAGE BOOKS AND PAPER DREAMS

This beloved neighborhood bookstore in Bellingham WA is reducing its waste with Ridwell. We sat down with Store Manager Erin Chernevock to hear their story.



Erin, thanks so much for talking to us today! Tell us how you heard about Ridwell, and what made you decide to sign up for the service at Village Books?

I'd been a Ridwell member for a few months at my home, when I started looking at some of the issues we had with waste here at the store. Our gift selection is massive, and when ordering these products wholesale, they're packaged with a lot of styrofoam and plastic film.

We'd been struggling to find responsible ways to dispose of these materials locally. There are some resources, but they're not set up to handle the volume we had. So we were storing bags and bags of this stuff, as well as five years' worth of dead fluorescent light tubes that we didn't know what to do with.

We realized that Ridwell could recycle all of these items, and we could just add bags to our pickup when we had extra, and it worked so well for us. Week by week, we were finally able to get rid of that huge backlog, and now it's all gone!

What's your favorite thing about using the service?

The absolute ease of it. You guys are so great to work with. It's been wonderful seeing all our styrofoam get recycled rather than go to a landfill. And honestly, the cost is amazing. Both for me at home and here at the store, it's SO worth it, for everything that you do.



Which items do you donate most frequently?

Styrofoam, plastic film and fluorescent light tubes. We had some lost-and-found winter coats that we were able to donate in the Featured Category bag. And the books category was great, because it connected us with Habitat for Humanity. We already had a relationship with them, but we didn't understand they had a need for books. Now, we're donating books to them alongside Friends of the Bellingham Public Library. So you guys helped link us together in a different way!

So glad to hear that! How much material is Village Books now recycling with Ridwell that previously went in the trash?

A lot. We've been maxing out our add-ons! When we signed up we were donating five 30-gallon bags of plastic film and five 30-gallon bags of styrofoam at every pickup, just to get rid of our backlog, and it stayed at that level through the holidays. We're now in our quietest time of year, and we're still donating two large bags of styrofoam and three large plastic film bags for recycling every two weeks.

What would you tell other businesses who were considering signing up?

It's absolutely worth it! And honestly, I'd tell them just how fantastic you all are to work with. We really want to minimize our footprint, and this is such an amazing way to keep things out of the landfill. Building communities is part of who we are, and Ridwell is such a great way to stay connected with the community and give back.

We're obviously big on protecting the environment. What's one of your favorite places to get outside and connect with nature here in Bellingham?

Growing up here, I've always loved hanging out at Marine Park. It's a simple place to just sit and stare at the world. The Chuckanuts are great for getting out and taking a good hike. Just being outside is my favorite thing!

Village Books is a wonderful community resource for learning. Do you have any recommendations for books that have impacted you personally around nature conservation or environmental activism?

Yes! These books all had a big impact on me, and many are relevant to the Pacific Northwest:

- 'Regeneration: Ending the Climate Crisis in One Generation' by Paul Hawken
- 'Cascadia Revealed: A Guide to the Plants, Animals, and Geology of the Pacific Northwest Mountains' by Daniel Mathews.
- 'The Heartbeat of Trees' by Peter Wohlleben
- 'Hurricane Lizards and Plastic Squid' by Thor Hanson, a local author who writes about some of the ways that nature has adapted to climate change over the years.

And anything mushroom-related, at all. Mushrooms can solve any problem, I'm convinced!

Haha! Noted. Thanks for the recommendations, and for sharing your story with us!

Learn more at ridwell.com and villagebooks.com.

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