

Dierssen: The benefits of reuse

Contributed by Rebecca Dierssen
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Reuse: To use an item more than once. This includes conventional reuse where the item is used again for the same function, and new-life reuse where it is used for a new function.

In contrast, recycling is the breaking down of the used item into raw materials which are used to make new items. By taking useful products and exchanging them, without reprocessing, reuse helps us save time, money, energy and resources.

In broader economic terms, reuse offers quality products to people and organizations with limited means, while generating jobs and business activity that contribute to the economy. This is the definition by Wikipedia the online encyclopedia.

Most of us have been reusing things our entire lives. Who didn't have some type of hand-me-down when they were a kid? Or maybe we purchased something only to use it for a different purpose years later? Reuse is how thrift shops survive and how many of us in today's economy are helping to make ends meet.

Today the Internet is an integral part of so many people's lives and many websites have sprung up helping the reuse cause. If you have something that's still in decent shape, but no longer needed in your household, consider giving that item to someone else to be able to reuse the product and extend it's life, therefore keeping it out of the landfill.

Here are some FREE and helpful ways to reuse:

– Donate your item to a needy cause or a friend or neighbor.

– Join www.freecycle.org. This site was set up solely for the reuse cause. You can offer your item to someone and in turn, if you need something request it and see if someone has that item they might consider getting rid of. It worked for me. I have offered a high chair, water skis, even tiki torches and all have been taken. I in turn needed a DVD player and received it from someone. Each county has its own group, but you are free to join any group. Many members of the Lake County freecycle group are also members of Mendocino County's freecycle group.

– Craig's List (www.craigslist.org) is by far one of the most popular Web sites for selling or giving your items away. Started in San Francisco it is one of the most popular English Web sites in the world, with over 40 million US users every month. Craigslist users self-publish more than 40 million new classified ads each month. On Craigslist you have the option of selling, bartering or giving away your items.

– If you have business or building materials you want to get rid of there is a site called www.calmax.org. Calmax is a free online materials exchange service designed to help businesses, organizations, local governments, industry, schools, and individuals find markets for nonhazardous materials that may otherwise be discarded. Anyone can access the site and anyone can post, all for FREE.

– If you have books, CDs or DVDs you can give and you shall receive for FREE at www.paperbackswap.com, www.cdswap.com or www.dvdswap.com.

– Take out an ad in the newspaper. The Record-Bee will post your free ad for one week if you have an item to give away; www.lakeconews.com and the MendoLake Exchange also offer free classified ads.

There are so many places to go to reuse yours or someone else's goods, however their success is dependent on the community supporting them. All of this brings me to a good point. In today's economy, who wouldn't want something for free and who wouldn't want to give something away to someone really in need. I guess the old adage still stands: "One man's junk is another man's treasure!"

One last note: If you have a large item that has used up all of its lives and you are a customer of Lake County Waste Solutions or South Lake Refuse, in the unincorporated areas of Lake County, consider the Bulky Item Program. As a customer you are entitled to two items per year, picked up curbside. Disposal fees still apply for certain appliances. For more information on Reducing, Reusing or Recycling please visit the county's website at www.recycling.co.lake.ca.us.

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