

pedal people news – fall 2007



5th anniversary party

You're invited to our 5th anniversary party! It's Sunday, December 9th, from 2 to 6 p.m., at 8 High St. in Florence (the home of Alex, Ruthy and Jackie). Come check out our trailers, meet the Pedal People and talk trash. Contact us at 586-8591 or see our website (www.pedalpeople.com) for directions or more information.

downtown trash - words from the street

On June 1, 2007 we signed a year-long contract with the City of Northampton to pick up trash from the 60+ public trash barrels and 4 recycling bins downtown. We pick up the trash seven days a week and consolidate it in a nearby compactor. Myke Hagans works about half of these shifts and here are some of his words from the street.

"I used to like doing it late at night and all the interactions with people. The remark I always got was, 'You know, they have trucks for that,' then I get to educate them all about Pedal People and bikes. I felt like a steward of the town being out there. But there are too many cars out at that time - it's scary.

Early in the morning is more in tune with my body's natural rhythms. It's you and the town and that's it. It's really beautiful and surreal. You get to see a town without cars. It would be nice to see that but with people. I think more people should go for walks downtown at four in the morning and experience a town without honking and motors.

I want people to be conscious that a human is changing those cans. People think that throwing their trash into the cans is the end of the line, but it's just the beginning. Trash does go to the landfill and stays there for a looong time.

I'm adapting really well to the cold. My blood's thickened up. Almost enjoy it. But it's not ridiculously cold yet.

I think the town could really benefit from not having to-go coffee or ice cream cups. It's depressing when you see a barrel overflowing with two things that are very preventable. Coffee is supposed to be an enjoyable experience - sit and relax and enjoy it with a mug.

I just love the downtown trash shifts. It's beautiful riding a bike and working for a town."

composting program

The Pedal People compost program is off to a great start. Not only have we been able to produce high quality compost but it has also greatly reduced the amount of trash that would have otherwise gone into our landfill. According to the Center for Ecological Technology, compostable waste in Massachusetts accounts for as much as 70% of the state's Municipal Solid Waste by weight. We are committed to bringing that percentage down and we would love to see the entire city of Northampton composting!

What happens to the food scraps?

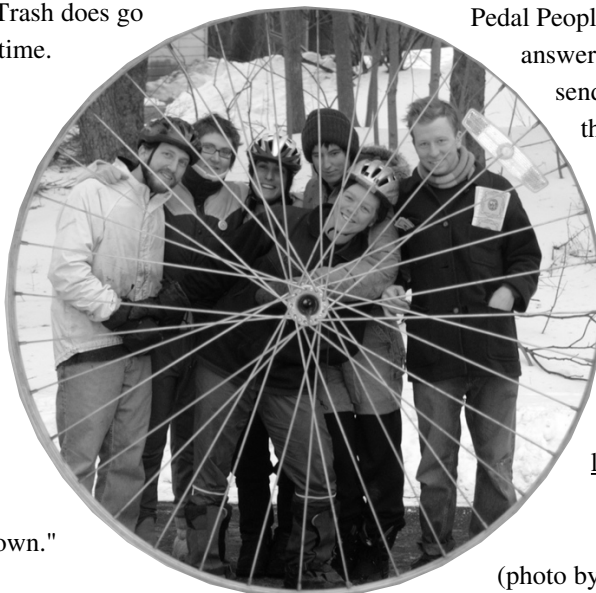
We take them to the Montview Neighborhood Farm, on Montview Avenue in Northampton, where we layer them with leaves, straw, and other carbon-rich materials. With some turning and help from earthworms, the food scraps decompose into finished compost which the farm uses on garden beds.

What can I do if I want to have a compost pile but I don't have enough space?

Pedal People can help you identify others in your neighborhood that would be interested in composting together. For example, three customers on Williams Street all share the same pile. One neighbor has room in her backyard for a pile, they take turns with maintenance and share in the benefits of the finished compost. Another option is an indoor worm box or vermicomposting, which is good for those who live in apartments or have limited space.

What if I need help or more information?

Pedal People can help you set up a pile, answer questions about maintenance, send out a compost doctor, and, if there are enough people interested, do a compost workshop. The Montview Neighborhood Farm also holds compost workshops both on outdoor piles and indoor worm boxes. You can contact Lisa DePiano for more information at ldepiano@pedalpeople.com.



(photo by Josh Freeman)

ways to reduce trash

Below are some exciting ways to reduce your trash production! Recycling is not enough; the process creates waste and uses resources. A change in lifestyle and an adoption of alternatives will lead to a healthier world. Landfill space is a pertinent issue today in the Northampton area and all over the world where landfills are encroaching on neighborhoods and the environment. There is a current proposal to expand the landfill over the site of the Barnes aquifer which may supply the residents of Easthampton with their drinking water. This is the first time that the DEP has permitted a landfill expansion over an aquifer. For more information, talk to your city councilors and officials (Office of the Mayor 587-1249, Office of the City Council 587-1210, or www.northamptonma.gov), or Citizens United for a Healthy Future (PO Box 98, Northampton 01061, www.savingparadise.info). Let's address this problem by reducing our own input to landfills and coming up with alternatives to their endless expansion.

- Consume less and live more simply. Many of our needs can be met by borrowing, lending, and sharing with neighbors, friends, and family.
- Compost vegetable scraps and yard waste. See the article in this newsletter for more information.
- Avoid buying and using single-use products. Use cloth napkins, handkerchiefs, reusable coffee filters, travel mugs, etc. Make cleaning rags out of worn-out clothes and material scraps. If you menstruate, consider less wasteful alternatives such as a menstrual cup, sea sponge, or washable cloth pads.
- If you buy kitty litter, consider litter with a sawdust, newspaper, or wheat-pellet base.
- Bring a cloth reusable bag to markets and stores or carry plastic bags with you. At many grocery stores there are bins by the front door for "recycling" bags; grab some of those.
- Buy fresh local unpackaged fruits and vegetables from local markets, farmer's markets, farm shares or grow your own. Check out CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture, www.buylocalfood.com). If you don't have land to garden, contact the Northampton Recreation Department at 587-1040 to get a community garden plot.
- Cook at home when possible and buy unprocessed food in bulk. Avoid frozen or processed foods; packaging creates excess waste. Make your own canned goods, condiments, juices, vinegar, yogurt, cheese, breads, etc.
- Drink tap water or filtered water. Bottled drinks are a major contributor to pollution and waste. 1.5 million barrels of oil are used each year to produce plastic water bottles. Tap water is actually more strictly regulated than bottled water.
- Avoid buying plastics in general. Plastic is made from gas and oil. Don't use styrofoam. It is non-recyclable and non-biodegradable.
- Reduce your junkmail! Contact the DMA (Direct Marketing Association, www.dmaconsumers.org) for a mail-in and online form that will drastically reduce your junk mail. Contact companies and organizations directly to remove your name from their mailing lists. Read the newspaper and other publications at your local library and/or share subscriptions.
- If you have reusable items you don't want, try Freecycle.org, Craigslist (westernmass.craigslist.org), Aunt Clara's Closet (in the Gazette), or donate to the Northampton Survival Center, the ReStore in Springfield (788-6900 or www.restoreonline.org), and other local organizations. Check out Earth911.org, a directory of companies that accept hard-to-recycle matter.
- Repair rather than replace items. Learn to fix things. Salvage discarded items that could be used. Host or attend a clothing swap.

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