

Every little bit helps and it all adds up...A Nottingham Family's recycling story

When we first moved to Nottingham back in 2002 I quickly learned of the rich history of our new town. Colonial residents of a young town who were part of the revolution that created our country; a town militia marching overnight to fight Redcoats in Boston and something that happened in my lifetime, the first in the Nation recycling center to reduce solid waste opened in 1974. My concerns at that time were who was my favorite superhero Spiderman or Batman, but there were citizens of this town that recognized Nottingham is a pretty special place and were going to take an active role in keeping it that way. I felt very lucky to be now part of a place that figured out before the rest of the country started recycling how to reduce our footprint on the planet. As homeowners we were now responsible for managing our waste; weekly dump trucks to pick up whatever we put out on the curb were a thing of the past. Now I had the opportunity to recycle as much as I wanted, I did not realize it as the transfer station sticker was in my hand the day I picked it up at town hall but the recycling bug had just bitten me, my introduction to Nottingham Recycling.

I had always been a fan of recycling doing it a bit over the years but never felt connected to the process until I became a resident of this town. Our natural resources make this town special and I hope it looks the same 100 years from now. By taking an active role in managing my family's waste I feel I can contribute to keep Nottingham clean and if we all take that approach imagine how successful we will be.

The first year we began sorting and trying to recycle as much as we could. Having separate containers for each material allowed us to do it efficiently. A container under the sink that holds whatever can be recycled, sits quietly and when filled (which seems to be very quickly) is then taken downstairs and sorted immediately. A big time saver when you head to the transfer station. As our efforts continued I began to take a hard look at how we made our purchases. Limiting our purchases on items that could not be recycled, the first one I remember cutting down on was plastic wrap. I had always been a fiend wrapping stuff but now I realized it was just going into a landfill. Aluminum foil was recyclable, using it instead of plastic wrap and began to save it and recycle (a quick rinse of food made the process easy) the foil. Then trying to include whatever was on the approved list of materials, small metal bottle caps, small paper items such as tags off clothes, went into bins and I watched them fill up. Almost treating it as a game," how much could we recycle this week" was our mantra.

We increased our efforts and added composting to our recycling process. One winter night I looked at the containers and wondered just how much was actually being recycled. Luckily a medical scale nearby gave me the tool necessary to find out. Each container was emptied, so I could adjust my calculations, then refilling I began weighing the bins. The numbers were very interesting. Much more paper was being recycled than I realized with higher poundage than I honestly expected. I began tracking amounts weekly, then monthly and eventually yearly and watched the numbers add up. I had to estimate the first two years but have been able to keep an accurate account for the last ten years. An added bonus to the larger amounts of solid waste being recycled was the reduction in how many clear refuse bags needed dropping from three bags a week to two.

This past year my daughter started to accompany me to the transfer station, learning how to sort number 1 and 2 plastics, cardboard from paper and her favorite part the swap shop. Now she knows to put the recyclables in the bin and when she sees trash out in public she always wants to pick it up. Coming home one day from school I asked her what she wanted to do." I want to pick up trash along the road", she had seen from her seat on the bus. Donning safety vests and gloves we walked along Poor Farm road and picked up items we saw. We quickly filled two clear bags and then added it to our next week's items. Upon our return home she held the bags of collected items like trophies, and in a way they were. I was so proud of her, she said, "Daddy, we need to keep Nottingham clean, it's our home and I love our home."

Each year has seen us increase our recycled material totals and I hope we are able to do it for many more, not only to reduce our solid waste but also to continue to enjoy living in a very special place. I remember seeing a sticker at Liar's Paradise...Nottingham, NH ...in the heart of vacation country. People come from all over to relax and recharge here, we get to live here year round, let's all do our part to keep that statement true. Each bale or container the town is able to sell; the funds returned benefit us all. Our transfer station is a way for all of us to connect personally with this town and our neighbors, a sort of social event and do our part to minimize each of our footprints on the planet. The transfer station has been helping us recycle for 40 years. Let's keep the spirit going that drove the folks back in 1974; that we need to take care of this place, not have it take care of us. So remember every little bit helps and it truly does all add up, our total for recycled materials as of May 2014 was 11.685 tons (23, 373 pounds), and to answer the question on who my favorite superhero was back in 1974.....Spiderman.