

# Town of New Paltz Seeing Less Solid Waste

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NEW PALTZ, N.Y. — Town officials attribute a 20 percent reduction in solid waste processing in 2012 to working through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Zero Waste initiative to keep recycling materials from ending up in landfills.

Town recycling coordinator Laura Petit on Friday said the town sent 404.4 tons of solid waste to the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency for a reduction of 100.81 tons from about 1,000 transfer station users.

“The waste stream has been more closely monitored, which follows all our plans and proposals when we put in for grant funding,” she said.

“We’re hands-on,” Petit said. “We have separation carts for some of the material ... and alert the users that there are more options. So if someone comes in with different types of plastic, like a food container or a child’s toy, we’ll have a place for that.”

Among town programs is one to provide education to consumers about the types of products purchased.

“Buy in bulk, don’t buy in little packaging,” Petit said. “Take a look at the packaging. If you buy eggs, for example, they come in three different types of containers. They’ll come in a cardboard container, they’ll come in a rigid plastic container, and they’ll come in a Styrofoam container. You are better off buying one of the first two and staying away from the Styrofoam.”

Petit added that residents have become better at recognizing ways to make a daily difference to have small steps add up to significant changes.

“It’s about reducing the waste that you’re bringing into the household,” she said. “We’re encouraging people

to do things like when you walk into a coffee shop, at least here in New Paltz, you can bring in a permanent durable cup with you, a travel mug, and they'll fill it up for you. So you don't need to leave with a Styrofoam or disposable cup."

Petit noted that the education may have led to a reduction in scrap metal revenues from \$22,000 in 2011 to \$16,000 in 2012. However, she said what the town lost may have gone into the pockets of transfer station users.

"I think they are selling their own," she said. "I know that I save my cans and aluminum foil at home and take it into one of the local guys. It's a couple of dollars, you don't get rich off it, but it certainly helps pay the gas bill."

Credit is also given to having a reuse center on the transfer station grounds, with the facility used to either give away or sell items at about 90 percent off retail price.

"We do divert anything that comes in and is not in bad shape into the reuse center," Petit said.

"We've gotten in some beautiful dish sets," she said. "We look more at building material (such as) left over bundles of shingles and left over rolls of insulation. We have art supplies. Someone brought in a beautiful wood chisel set. That adds up and there's quite a bit of weight there and may be 50 percent of what we've been able to divert."

Petit said that SUNY New Paltz has not been bringing solid waste to the site but is involved with a food waste composting program.

"SUNY was already recycling their food waste but it was getting hauled ... a little over an hour drive," she said. "Because SUNY is on board with the Zero Waste initiative, they wanted to reduce their carbon footprint and they requested that their hauler bring it here. That was really one of the first and easiest initiatives under the Zero Waste action plan."