

A Quarterly Newsletter Of



Solid Waste District of  
LaPorte County  
(219) 326-0014  
(800) 483-7700  
www.alco.org/solidwaste  
Winter 2003



# Thanks for recycling!

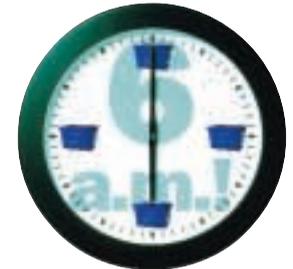


2002 was a great year for recycling in LaPorte County. Here are some of the highlights:

- At our eight mobile Household Hazardous Waste collections, we received 60.2 tons of material.
- Our two Tire/White Goods Recycling Days brought in 141.6 tons of tires and 67.7 tons of appliances for recycling.
- The totals for our three-day drop-off event for obsolete electronics had not been received as of the date of publication. Please watch for some high numbers in our next issue!
- Each month on average, we collected an estimated 387.2 tons of recyclables at the curb and 134.9 tons of recyclables at the drop-off and school sites.
- Our yard waste site handled an estimated 5,436.8 tons of Christmas trees and organic debris, turning them into usable compost.

Thanks to all of the residents who recycled in 2002. If you didn't recycle in 2002, add recycling to your New Year's Resolutions for 2003. If you did, thanks—and try to recycle even more in 2003!

## It's 6 a.m.



### Do you know where your recyclables are?

If it's your recycling day, we hope your answer is a resounding, "Yes, they are at the curb!" Recyclables must be at the curb in your blue or red bin by 6 a.m. on your scheduled collection day.

If your recyclables are at the curb by 6 a.m., your bin should not and will not be missed. However, if you try to guess when the truck will come, you might miss it entirely. Remember—there are no return trips to pick up recycling that didn't make it to the curb on time!

Be sure that your red or blue recycling bin is clearly visible from the street. Your bin is the driver's signal to stop and pick up recyclables. The driver will pick up recyclables set out next to the bin only if they are in a container that is clearly marked "Recycling." Remember—no bin, no pickup.

In LaPorte County, recyclables are collected every other week. There are some schedule changes for 2003. These have been advertised in the newspaper. If you aren't sure which week is now your scheduled week, call our office or visit our website, [www.alco.org/solidwaste](http://www.alco.org/solidwaste). The monthly collection calendar is available when you click on "Curbside Recycling." The weekly recycling calendar is also printed in the LaPorte Herald-Argus by township. Look on Page 2 of the newspaper under the heading "Did You Hear."

For more information about recycling, call our office, 219-326-0014 or 1-800-483-7700, or visit our website, [www.alco.org/solidwaste](http://www.alco.org/solidwaste).

## Batteries by the billion

Annually, Americans use more than 3 billion single-use and rechargeable household batteries to power toys, games, appliances, phones, remote controls, cameras, and more. At present, about 2 billion of these are disposed each year. However, as battery use continues to increase by more than 5 percent a year, the sale of rechargeable batteries is growing twice as fast as the sale of disposables.

After rechargeable batteries run down, they can be recharged with a charger unit. The charger plugs into a regular wall outlet. After as little as an hour or as much as a day, the batteries are fully recharged and ready to use again. Alkaline rechargeables can be recharged and reused 50 or more times. Some other rechargeables will accept hundreds of charges—and have hundreds of reuses.

Whether you need batteries for hand-held games, toys, remote controls,

phones, or cameras, buy rechargeables. Over time, you'll save money, as well as trips to the store, by recharging your batteries at home. You'll also have a lot fewer batteries to discard! One rechargeable can replace 50 to 300 disposable batteries!

When your rechargeable batteries are "spent" and will no longer accept a charge, be sure to dispose of them properly. Spent rechargeables, button batteries, and other types of household batteries can be recycled at our mobile Household Hazardous Waste collections during the outdoor season (spring through fall) or at any of these locations year-round:

- Amoco J-Mart, 1338 State Road 2, LaPorte
- Amoco J-Mart, 10300 US Highway 30, Wanatah
- Amoco J-Mart, 2913 South US Highway 421, Westville
- City of LaPorte Recycling, 102 "L"

Street, LaPorte

- LaPorte Herald-Argus, 701 State Street, LaPorte
- Kabelins Hardware, 512 Andrew Ave., LaPorte
- Kabelins Hardware, 432 St. John Road, Michigan City
- Kingsford Heights (Nutrician Center) Community Building, 515 Wayland Road, Kingsford Heights
- Markey Enterprises, 304 "J" Street, LaPorte
- Michigan City Sanitary District, 3700 East Michigan Blvd., Michigan City
- Pepsi, 600 West US Highway 20, Michigan City
- Radio Shack, 311 "J" Street, LaPorte
- Sears (Electronics Dept.), 3901 S. Franklin St., Michigan City
- Solid Waste District Office, 2354 N. US 35, LaPorte
- Thimbleberry & Co., 247 Johnson Rd., LaPorte

Questions? Call the Lake Michigan Districts Household Hazardous Waste Program at 1-800-483-7700 or 219-326-1425.

## Cleaning up cleaners

Household cleaning products make it into our shopping carts and homes for a single reason: cleaning! However, along with their super-powerful promises come a lot of chemicals, which may contribute to indoor air pollution, cause breathing difficulties, and in some cases, lead to poisoning. Household cleaners are responsible for nearly 10 percent of the toxic exposures reported to the U.S. Poison Control Centers. More than half of these involve children under the age of six.

Compounding the problem is the common perception that rooms, floors, clothes, and surfaces are only clean if

they "smell clean." Unfortunately, the smells that most people associate with clean aren't the absence of dirt, grime, or germs, but the presence of added fragrances. These fragrances can cause serious respiratory effects, including headaches, sneezing, watery eyes, and asthma attacks.

The concerns raised by these products don't stop in our households, however. In 2002, the U.S. Geological Survey found partially broken down detergents and disinfectants in two-thirds of streams tested.

You can avoid many of these hazards by choosing products wisely and

using them sensibly. Reading labels is your first line of defense. Make sure that the labels provide clear information on how to use and store the product. The label should contain clear instructions on mixing the product, including warnings about chemical combinations to avoid. Also, be sure that the label provides clear information on how to contact the manufacturer's customer service center with questions on health, safety, environmental hazards, use, and disposal.

Another way to avoid many of these hazards is to select the least toxic products possible for every job. Watch out for words such as "Danger" or "Poison," which typically mark the most hazardous products. Instead, look for products that say "Warning" (moderately hazardous) or "Caution" (slightly haz-

ardous). Better yet, seek out products that are labeled "Non-Toxic" to humans and aquatic life. Also, search for specific claims, such as "no solvents," "no phosphates," or "plant-based," rather than general claims, such as "environmentally friendly." Biodegradable products are usually better as well, but give preference to biodegradable products with added information, such as "readily biodegradable" or "biodegradable in three to five days."

Finally, learn to use substitutes. Many household cleaners can be replaced with soap, water, baking soda, vinegar, lemon juice, and elbow grease. Recipes for non-toxic cleaners made from these common household products are plentiful and available in newspaper columns, on the Internet, in books at the library, and from our office.

# Where did we get all this STUFF?

Have you ever asked a young child where milk comes from? Did that child answer, "The store"? We chuckle at this misunderstanding. However, we might hold some similar misunderstandings ourselves.

For instance, where do T-shirts and shoes come from? What about computers? Or, the fast food meal of burger, fries, and a cola? Tempted to answer as that young child did?

Find the real answers in John C. Ryan and Alan Their Durning's book, *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things* (Northwest Environment Watch, 1997).

Ryan and Durning set out to look at a typical day in the life of a consumer from the standpoint of resource consumption. Each day, the average American adult consumes about 120 pounds of resources—most of it indirectly. This includes all of the resources—from fuel to wood to farm products—that go into making the things that we use and eat every day.

In traveling through the consumer's day, Ryan and Durning trace the history and whereabouts of the components needed to make these common products: coffee, newspaper, T-shirts, shoes, bikes and cars, computers, a hamburger, fries, and a cola.

For instance, the T-shirt pulled on in the morning, made from half polyester and half cotton, weighs about 4 ounces. Here's where it might have come from:

The polyester portion of the T-shirt probably began its life as a few tablespoons of petroleum. The drilling operation used diesel fuel, heavy metals, and water to flush away rocks and debris and get to the oil. The crude oil was



then transported by ship to a refinery, made primarily from steel, where it was processed into various products. Some of this processed oil went by truck or rail to a chemical factory where, through a long process involving several more chemicals, it was turned into long plastic fibers.

The 2 ounces of cotton in the T-shirt came from 14 square feet of cropland somewhere in the southern U.S. Tractors, irrigation systems, and various pesticides were used as the cotton was grown. A cotton gin separated the fibers from the seeds. The fibers were sent to another southern state to a textile mill where they were blended with the polyester fibers.

A knitting machine at a different textile mill created the fabric, which was then shipped to a foreign country where it was cut and sewn on a sewing machine to make the shirt. The shirt came back to the U.S. on a ship.

The example of the T-shirt points out that most of our products are better traveled than we are—and illustrates that fuel, transportation, machinery, human labor, and a host of other inputs go into every item that we handle throughout the day.

Look around you. Give some thought to how many resources were used just to build the walls standing in the room where you're seated reading this.

Intrigued? Check out a copy of *Stuff*. Not only will you have a new respect for the complexity of the items you use every day, but you'll also have a desire to purchase new products with care and consideration, to make them last as long as possible, and to reuse and recycle all you can before you dispose of anything.

## Creative Design with CDs

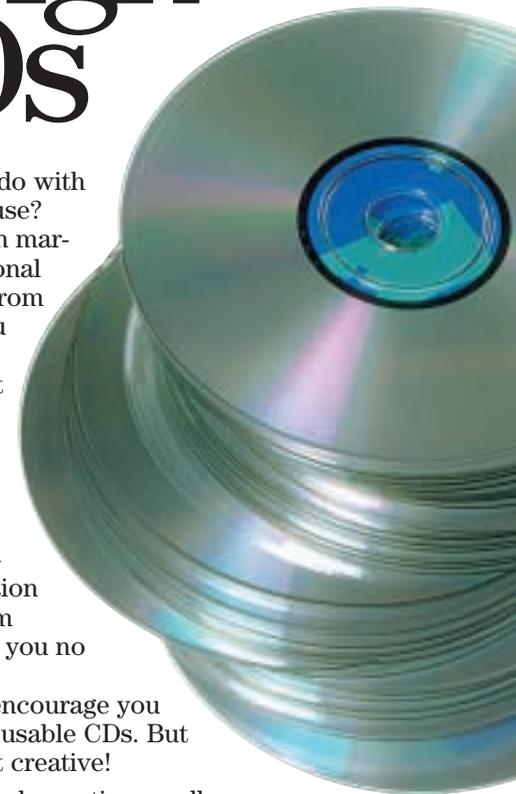
Wondering what to do with CDs that you can't use? Maybe you've gotten marketing and promotional CDs in the mail or from a store. Perhaps you have scratched or unusable CDs. What about those promotional CDs in the mail or from a store. Perhaps you have scratched or unusable CDs. What about those promotional games that never really seemed to play or games someone in your family has outgrown? Not to mention the host of CDs from computer programs you no longer use.

We, of course, encourage you to give away or sell usable CDs. But for those others, get creative!

- Don't buy shiny, decorative candle holders at the store. Put a CD shiny side up and center a candle on it. You've made your own beautiful candle base.
- Instead of buying reflective driveway markers, attach the shiny side of a CD to a small post, dowel, or stake. Place them at the edge of your driveway. You'll keep visitors off the grass—and folks backing up away from the mailbox.
- Using felt, cover one side of the CD. Cut the felt so that it's the same size and shape as the CD and glue it on. Now, place your new drink coaster felt side down.
- Does your house have a computer or media room? Create a clever window valance or wall hanging by suspending CDs with twine or fishing line. String the twine through a hole that you drill in the disc or run it through the existing hole in the middle.
- Provide CDs to a local artist or classroom that will use them to create art.

You can also recycle CDs. Search for "Compact Disc Recycling" or "CD Recycling" on the Internet. Or, visit these websites for details:

- [www.greendisk.com](http://www.greendisk.com)
- [www.lacerta.com](http://www.lacerta.com)
- [www.sdm.sony.com/](http://www.sdm.sony.com/), click on "Services" and then on "CD Recycling"



## Turning up the heat on thermostats

About 10 tons of mercury in solid waste each year come from thermostats. This results when used thermostats, many of which contain mercury, are improperly disposed with household or commercial waste.

During normal operation, the mercury in a thermostat is sealed within a glass bulb. The bulb is durable and attached to a metal strip that absorbs shock. The outer casing further protects the mercury bulb. Hanging on the wall, the mercury within the thermostat works as a switch and poses no harm to humans.

However, if thermostats are not handled carefully when they are removed, the glass bulb can break. This is especially likely if the thermostat is thrown into a box or bin with other items. Thermostats should always be handled with care.

The Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC), a non-profit corporation that was formed in 1998 by members of the National Electrical Manufacturers



Association, was established with the goal of recycling every used, wall-mounted, mercury-containing thermostat. By 2001, TRC offered recycling in all of the lower 48 states. During the first six months of 2002, TRC collected more than 28,000 thermostats and processed 231 pounds of mercury, an increase of 15 percent over the same period the previous year. Since 1998, TRC has recovered the mercury from 150,000 used thermostats. For information about TRC, visit [www.nema.org/trc](http://www.nema.org/trc), or call 703-841-3249.

Manufacturers have begun to phase out mercury-containing thermostats in favor of electronic and other types that do not contain mercury. If you need to replace a thermostat, ask your retailer about recycling or ask your contractor to remove and recycle the old thermostat. Be sure to select a new thermostat that does not use a mercury switch. And, never place a mercury-containing thermostat in your trash.

# Recycling and reduction continue to grow

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently released its snapshot of how Americans handled their waste in the year 2000. There was some very good news in this report. Americans could have created and disposed nearly 300 million tons of trash in 2000—and didn't. More than 125 million tons of what might have become waste either wasn't created, or was reused, composted, or recycled.

First, waste generation appears to be stabilizing—at least for now. The average American generated 4.5 pounds of waste each day in 2000, down

from 4.62 pounds per day in 1999.

Second, recovery, including recycling and community-wide composting efforts, reached an all-time high—with 30.2 percent of all materials recovered!

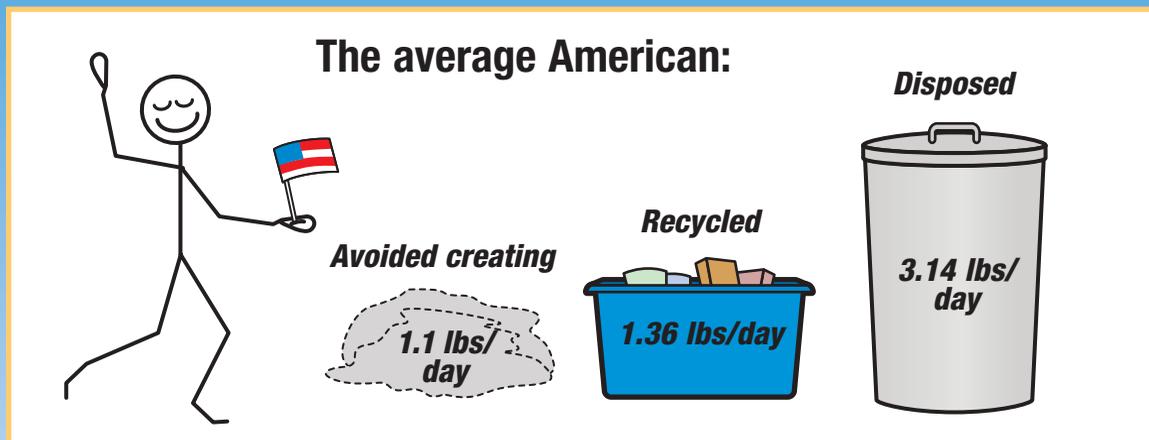
Third, reduction of waste at its source also reached a new height. While 231.9 million tons of solid waste were created—55.1 million tons weren't. Nearly half of this reduction resulted from residents, businesses, and schools practicing grasscycling (mulching) and backyard composting. Much of the remainder came from a variety of products, such as

containers, packaging, and papers, getting lighter and thinner.

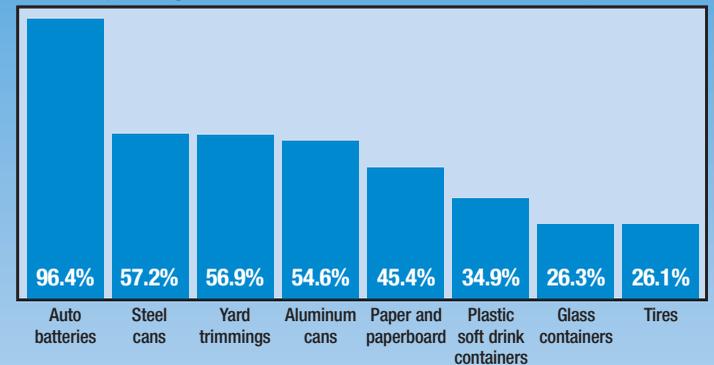
This is all good news as Americans strive to achieve the new goal set by the U.S. EPA—to recycle 35 percent of the waste created by the year 2005. Many communities have already achieved goals much higher than this, so we know it can be done nationwide.

To view a copy of the report, visit this website: [www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl](http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl) and click on "Basic Facts."

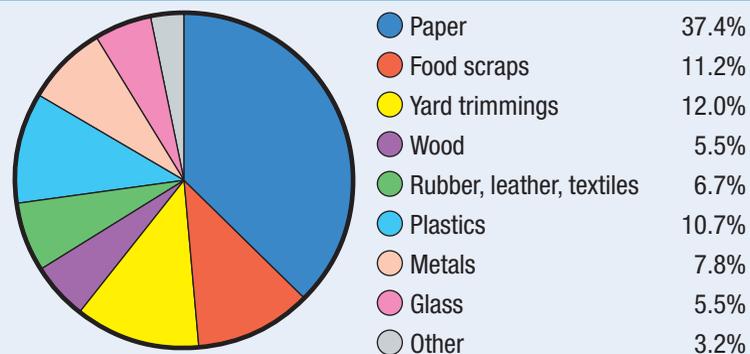
## Here's how and what Americans are doing with waste



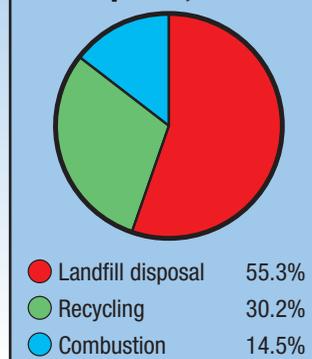
### Recycling Rates for Selected Materials, 2000



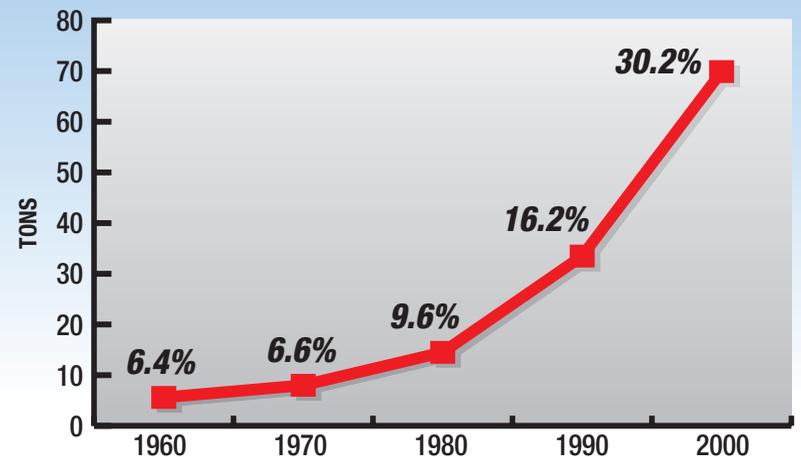
### Materials Generated (before recycling), 2000



### Recycling and Disposal, 2000



### Recycling Rates, 1960-2000



Source: U.S. EPA's *Municipal Solid Waste in the United States: 2000 Facts and Figures*

## Put another log on the



If you have a wood-burning fireplace, consider purchasing "logs" made from old, waxed corrugated containers.

Wax-coated corrugated cardboard boxes are used to transport a variety of items, including a great deal of produce. Unfortunately, these boxes cannot be recycled with other non-coated cardboard because the wax is a contaminant in the recycling process. As a result, wax-coated corrugated is disposed at a much higher rate than its non-coated counterpart, which enjoys a recycling rate of about 75 percent.

While the wax-coated cardboard can't be recycled with other boxes, it does have other potential uses. Several companies are using this material to create fireplace logs. Look for these "wax box" recycled logs at your fireplace supply retailer. If they aren't in stock, tell the manager about these logs and ask that the store stock them in the future.

For more information about these logs, visit:

- [www.ciwmb.ca.gov/recyclestore](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/recyclestore), and search for "logs" and "starters"
- [www.waxboxfirelogs.com](http://www.waxboxfirelogs.com)

## Posting progress

New postal regulations are making it easier for post offices to donate undelivered samples to organizations that will get them to people in need.

The Postal Services estimates that post offices get stuck with about 164,000 tons of undelivered product samples every year. These samples include food, toothpaste, shampoo, diapers, soap, aspirin, and much more.

Under the new regulations, these items won't have to go in the trash. Post offices will be able to donate undelivered, unopened products to food banks, homeless shelters, and other non-profit organizations.

Helping post offices donate these materials will be the Reuse Development Organization (ReDO), a national non-profit devoted to all types of reuse, and America's Second Harvest, which provides emergency food assistance to more than 23 million hungry Americans each year, as well as local affiliates.

Food banks, shelters, and other interested non-profits should contact their nearest post office to ask to be placed on the list of organizations that will receive donated products. The receiving organization will be required to sign a release and provide the post office with some other information.

For more information about this and other exciting reuse projects, visit the ReDO website at [www.redo.org](http://www.redo.org) or call 317-631-5395. Or, contact America's Second Harvest at 312-263-2303, or visit [www.secondharvest.org](http://www.secondharvest.org).

To read the new postal regulations, go to [www.usps.com/cpim/ftp/bulletin/2002/html/pb22088](http://www.usps.com/cpim/ftp/bulletin/2002/html/pb22088) and read the "Domestic Mail" section.

**Samples to stay out of trash and help needy families**

## WHAT'S UP?

While supplies last, compost is available on a first-come, first-served basis to LaPorte County residents. Remember—compost is a soil amendment not top soil. Mix compost in equal parts with soil before use.

Pick up compost at the following self-serve locations during daylight hours:

- Fish Lake—Fish Lake Community Building (Old Lions Club property), on 800 East
- Hanna—County Highway Barns
- Hudson Lake—Hudson Township Park
- Kankakee/Rolling Prairie—County Highway Barns, corner of 700 E. and 400 N.
- Kingsford Heights—Grayton Road on left (cement slab by sewage plant)
- LaPorte—City Street Department, 1206 Second Street
- Michigan City—Hitchcock Street
- Union Mills—Mill Pond, off Water Street
- Wanatah—At sewer plant, 12562 S. 1050 W.
- Westville—Prairie Meadow Park

Remember to recycle your Christmas! Bundle wrapping paper (non-foil) in paper grocery bags. Break down cardboard boxes so that they are no more than 2-feet square. Place these materials on or beside your curbside bin for recycling.

Remember to “tree-cycle,” too. Cut holiday trees may be dropped off at the Zigler Road compost site.

### We want your suggestions, questions and comments!

We are also available to speak to your club or organization about solid waste, waste reduction, recycling and composting.

**Solid Waste District of  
LaPorte County**  
2354 North U.S. Highway 35  
LaPorte, IN 46350  
(219) 326-0014  
(800) 483-7700  
[www.alco.org/solidwaste](http://www.alco.org/solidwaste)

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PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

70% POST-CONSUMER NEWS  
CONTENT, USING SOY INKS

Ink jet printer cartridges can be recycled for free. In fact, for every qualified cartridge received at the recycling plant run by AAA Environmental, Leadership LaPorte County will receive \$1.00, which will go toward a scholarship fund.

Collect all the ink jet cartridges that you use in printers at home, work, or school. You'll help the environment and help fund an important local leadership program at the same time!

To recycle your ink jet cartridges, simply pick up a postage-paid envelope at the Solid Waste District of LaPorte County office, place the empty cartridge inside the envelope, and drop it in the mail.

Or, drop off your ink jet cartridge at one of these locations:

4-H Extension, LaPorte  
A.K. Smith Career Center, Michigan City  
Advanced Communications, Inc., Michigan City  
Barker Middle School, Michigan City  
Bethany Lutheran Church, LaPorte  
Coolspring Elementary School, Michigan City  
Countryside Christian Church, Michigan City  
Edgewood Elementary School, Michigan City  
Fanning-Howey Associates, Michigan City  
Hanna Post Office, Hanna  
Horizon Bank, Michigan City and LaPorte  
Indiana Paging Network, LaPorte  
Jim Jessup State Farm Insurance, Hanna  
J-Mart Amoco Station, Wanatah and Westville  
Joy Elementary School, Michigan City  
Knapp Elementary School, Michigan City  
Krueger Middle School, Michigan City  
La J-Mart Amoco Station, LaPorte  
LaPorte City Hall, LaPorte  
LaPorte Co. Museum, LaPorte  
LaPorte Co. Public Library, LaPorte  
LaPorte Co. Sheriff's Office, LaPorte

## Re-ink



LaPorte Co. Soil & Water District, LaPorte  
LaPorte Herald-Argus, LaPorte  
Lighthouse Place Management Office, Michigan City  
Lincoln Elementary School, LaPorte  
Marsh Elementary School, Michigan City  
Merrion & Associates, Michigan City  
Michiana Resources, Inc., Michigan City  
Michigan City Alternative School, Michigan City  
Michigan City Area School Adm., Michigan City  
Michigan City Central Services, Michigan City  
Michigan City Chamber of Commerce, Michigan City  
Michigan City City Hall, Michigan City  
Michigan City High School, Michigan City  
Michigan City Jr. High School, Michigan City  
Michigan City News-Dispatch, Michigan City

## Worm feast today, compost tomorrow

Vermicomposting, creating compost with the help of red wiggler worms, is simple. You can set up a worm bin in your kitchen, basement, office, or classroom. While you eat, sleep, work, and study, the worms will be busy turning your food waste into valuable and nutrient-rich compost.

Worms do best at room temperature, so plan to keep them where the temperature is usually between 55 and 80 degrees. You'll need a bin and damp shredded newspaper or cardboard for bedding.

A pound of red wiggler worms will eat about a half pound of food scraps per day. These scraps may include fruit and vegetable peels and scraps, cereal, bread, eggshells, and coffee grounds. Try to balance highly acidic foods, such as orange peels, with less acidic foods, such as oatmeal or cream of wheat. Soak dry or salty foods and drain off the excess water before feeding these items to your worms.

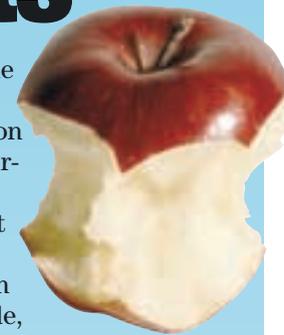
You can feed your worms every day or once or twice a week. To feed your worms, move the bedding aside and create a small hole for the food. Rotate where you bury the food. Periodically check to make sure that the old food has been consumed.

Vermicompost is ready to harvest when the contents have turned dark brown. Vermicompost contains a lot of nutrients that your plants need, so add it to your garden soil or flowerpots.

If you want to learn more about vermicomposting, check out *Worms Eat My Garbage* by Mary Appelhof and *Recycle with Earthworms: The Red Wiggler Connection* by Shelley C. Grossman and Toby Weitzel. Both books are easy to read and include many helpful suggestions, as well as answers to most commonly asked questions. If you're searching for information about vermicomposting on the Internet, visit these sites: [www.cfe.cornell.edu/compost/worms/wormhome.html](http://www.cfe.cornell.edu/compost/worms/wormhome.html) or [www.wormwoman.com](http://www.wormwoman.com).

Michigan City Public Library, Michigan City  
Mullen Elementary School, Michigan City  
Nieman Elementary School, Michigan City  
Notre Dame Elementary School, Michigan City  
Parents & Friends, LaPorte  
Park Elementary School, Michigan City  
PC Depot, Michigan City  
Pine Elementary School, Michigan City  
Purdue North Central, Westville  
Queen of All Saint's School, Michigan City  
Riggs Mowers, LaPorte  
Solid Waste District of LaPorte Co., LaPorte  
Springfield Elementary School, Michigan City  
St. Mary's Elementary School, Michigan City  
St. Mary's High School, Michigan City  
Trail Creek Town Hall, Trail Creek  
Trans-Apparel Group, Michigan City  
Wal-Mart, Michigan City  
Wanatah Public Library, Wanatah  
Wanatah Public Schools, Wanatah  
Weil-McLain Company, Michigan City  
Wells Fargo Bank, LaPorte  
YMCA, LaPorte

## Food facts



According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the average American generates about 184 pounds of food waste each year. Nationwide, this results in 25.9 million tons of food waste. Food waste includes uneaten portions of meals, spoiled food, and preparation scraps.

Food waste is the third largest component in municipal solid waste, behind yard waste and corrugated cardboard. However, because yard waste composting and corrugated cardboard recycling capture so much of those materials, food waste is the largest single item by weight in the trash that we dispose.

Annually, only about 2.6 percent of food waste is recovered through composting efforts. At present, most of the food waste that is composted comes from commercial operations, such as food processing facilities, distribution centers, and grocery stores.

Increasingly, residents and institutions are working harder to get this compostable material out of the waste stream. Efforts include selecting and purchasing food products to reduce later waste, composting certain food scraps in backyard compost piles or vermicompost bins, and using in-sink garbage disposals for wet food waste. Meanwhile, large-scale food waste composting is still in its infancy in most areas.