

Roseville • Little Canada Review

5/8/2008

Being green means seeing green



Bev Scalze
State Representative District 54B

The widespread popularity of recent e-waste recycling events around the metro area is a good sign that I'm not the only one with a pile of old electronics gathering dust in the basement. The line of people waiting to properly dispose of their old computers, televisions and printers was reportedly so long at the State Fair Grounds on April 11 and 12, that many people were not able to unload their cars.

Events such as the recent e-waste recycling initiative offer a safe and free way for us to rid our basements, garages and closets of old electronics. They also help sustain many "green collar" jobs and support our struggling economy. A local company that I would like to spotlight is Retrofit Recycling in Little Canada. Retrofit Recycling specializes in the recycling of fluorescent lamps, ballasts, batteries, electronics, mercury devices and hazardous waste. They accept household electronic waste for free daily Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and also have a commercial hazardous waste division which charges per pound for disposal.

On a recent Saturday they unloaded 90,000 pounds of household electronic waste from more than 600 cars and no one had to wait for more than five minutes. The goal of Retrofit Recycling was one minute per vehicle and with the help of the Coon Rapids Boys' Golf Team, who received a donation for helping unload e-waste from vehicles, I think they met their goal. I actually went through twice and didn't wait at all either time.

As technology continues to improve and become more affordable, our collections of outdated electronics continue to grow. Many of these products contain hazardous and toxic materials that need to be disposed of in a safe and appropriate manner. Last year I co-authored and helped pass a new e-waste bill into law. The bill established a statewide program to collect and recycle used computers and TV monitors from households and requires each manufacturer that sells these products in Minnesota to share in the responsibility of recycling electronic products.

Besides the obvious benefits of keeping hazardous materials out of our landfills, and thus soil and water supplies, recycling is a powerful emerging force for our state economy. In 2006, 40 percent of municipal solid waste was recycled saving 46 trillion BtU's of energy, which is almost enough energy to power every home in Ramsey County for a full year. In 2003, recycling helped keep 1.5 million tons of greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere; this is equal to taking more than one million cars off the road. Minnesota's recycling industry is responsible for 20,000 jobs in the state and adds almost \$3 billion to the state economy.

Recycling is not just a fad or an alternative to landfills. It is an emerging economic boom for our state and a solid foundation for a cleaner, less wasteful future. ▫