

Recycle For Change Reveals How Textile Recycling Could Impact Our Environment

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- In our throw-away society it is easy and it is cheap for us to toss an old t-shirt and replace it with a new one without any thought. While a very small percentage of individuals utilize brick and mortar stores to donate unwanted [textiles](#), the fact that 85% of textiles end up in landfills clearly points to the fact that not everyone is recycling their unwanted textiles.

Society needs a paradigm shift in the way it thinks about textiles as a whole. It looks at other commodities and see value. The aluminum in soda cans, the tin in cans, and the plastic in our water bottles, but when it comes to textiles, it doesn't think of the materials they are made of as a commodity or a resource and it needs to shift the way it thinks about these materials as they are equally as valuable as some of the commodities we have already been trained to recycle.

Every Cotton T-Shirt Starts Life In A Cotton Field.

As one of the most common commodities used to make textiles, it only makes sense that we take a closer look at what it takes to produce it. Cotton is a very resource intensive crop for farmers grow. It takes a whopping 700 gallons of water to produce about a pound of conventional cotton – enough for a single T-shirt. Cotton is a major factor in the depletion and degradation of freshwater supplies in the agricultural areas in which it is grown. This is particularly important as society looks for ways to reduce water consumption to mitigate ongoing and future water shortages. California is currently in year three of one of the worst droughts in the last century. The drought in California affects over 37 million people and it is imperative that society starts to look at cotton as a commodity and seek ways to reduce the amount of cotton we need to produce through better re-use and recycling of textiles. Not only does cotton deplete water resources, but even worse, it uses large amount of pesticides and fertilizers; harming the environment, damaging soil health and polluting groundwater. Half of a



Recycle for Change makes it easy to recycle your used textiles.

pound of chemical pesticides and fertilizers go into each pound of conventionally-grown American cotton. According to the Pesticide Action Network of North America, “conventionally grown cotton uses more insecticides than any other single crop. Nearly \$2.6 billion worth of pesticides are sprayed on cotton fields each year — accounting for more than 10% of total pesticide use and nearly 25% of insecticides use worldwide.” In addition to harming the environment, cotton production also presents a very real threat to human health and safety. A 2002 study shows that cotton ranked third among California crops for total number of worker illnesses caused by pesticides.

So How Do We Solve the 85% Problem?

As many in the resource management industry know, the logistics and cost of recycling programs are often a barrier to successfully keeping resources out of the landfill. Textiles have particularly difficult obstacles to overcome. They cannot be included in the typical curbside pickups because running them through that process renders them unusable. In addition to this, the sporadic nature in which people discard textiles doesn't lend well to a regular pickup program, nor is it cost effective. With these barriers to recycling textiles in mind, how do we fill the void in [textile recycling](#)?

[Recycle For Change](#) is Filing the Void

Recycle for Change's self-subsidized program aids municipalities by providing the service of convenient textile recycling location for their citizens, while keeping textiles out of the landfill and funding their charitable mission of fighting poverty and climate change.

Their program works because it's easy, it's convenient and most importantly it is free. Through their network of donation boxes in the Greater Bay Area, they provide residents with an easy way to recycle their clothes at their convenience. Having boxes at locations that people frequent on a daily basis is what makes this program so successful. The locations fit into people's busy lives. Patrons of their donation boxes love to use them because they are easy to spot and they can fit them into their daily routines, using them when stopping to get gas, going to the local grocery store, grabbing a bite to eat at a favorite restaurant or dropping the kids off at school. Having boxes piggybacking onto frequently visited sites makes it convenient to recycle and it also reduces carbon emissions because it prevents someone from having to drive out of their way to a recycling facility or brick and mortar center or even worse, throwing their items in the trash. And at the same time, they can still enjoy the benefit of getting a tax write off for donating to a non-profit. It's a win-win all around.

Recycling as an Economic Driver

It is important to understand that the benefits don't stop there. Textile recycling not only protects the environment; it also drives the economy and saves municipalities on landfill fees, which ultimately get passed off onto the residents. According to the California Integrated Waste

Management Board (now Cal Recycle), "recycling creates greater economic value than "throwing it all away." Stanford University points out that "California's investments in recycling collection infrastructure have brought substantial returns in the form of reciprocal investments and job creation by recycling manufacturers. Textile recycling provides a revenue stream for recycling industries, creates local jobs, funds charitable initiatives, helps foster small business, provides affordable clothing and encourages recycled product development.

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