



MIDDLESEX COUNTY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY

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County Book Recycling Program Sees Climbing Participants, Steady Profits

MIDDLESEX COUNTY – While students bury their heads in the books, administrators from one local school tally up profits from page after page of scrapped reading material.

The Middlesex County Vocational and Technical Schools in East Brunswick are the latest participants of the County's Book Recycling Program and the most recent recipient of a 20-cubic-yard Dumpster© used for collections.

For more than three months, the schools' campus was a stockpile site for various materials that would eventually be recycled into everything from tissue to paper to new books and more.

Like prior participants, the Vo-Tech's load of books is transported to the Waste Management Materials Recycling facility and the school administration receives compensation for these processed goods, said Ed Windas, MCIA Recycling Division manager.

"They give us items that needed to be disposed of already and we send them a check," Windas said. "It's really a no-brainer for area school districts."

In 2006, the County first kicked-off its Book Recycling Program at Grant Elementary School in South Plainfield.

"We started this program because schools were calling about outdated books and what to do with them," Windas said. "In some cases, they tried to reuse them by sending them overseas, but there were obvious language barrier issues with that scenario. Some tried to send the books to poorer districts in the states, but nobody seemed to want them there either."

In that first year, this pilot program limited its sights solely to hard cover books.

By 2007, more than 16 tons of recyclable goods had poured in and the County had expanded its scope of acceptable collection items to include soft cover books, old files and mixed paper.

"Before this program, if a school wanted to dispose of a large quantity of old books, it had few options," Windas said. "This provides them with an opportunity to get rid of a lot of books – years' worth of old books – in one shot."

Six years after introducing the program, the Middlesex County Division of Solid Waste Management and the Middlesex County Improvement Authority have helped recycle more than 87 tons of paper and returned nearly \$3,500 in surplus revenue to participating schools.

The number of schools signing onto the program has grown as well, with 34 on the receiving end of the collection Dumpster© thus far – some of which, have become repeat collectors.

The length of time a school is in possession of the receptacle depends on both preference and demand and can range from a few weeks to a few months, Windas said.

The profit for recycling can fluctuate too, soaring as high as \$60 a ton and more recently dipping down to an average \$20 per ton.

While the additional revenue is a plus, the program is most profitable to students who are learning the real-world value of recycling, Windas said.

"There's more to it than the money," he said. "It's showing students a real-life situation, where recycling can pay off; not through a monetary value, but the cubic yardage and tonnage they're keeping out of landfills and incinerators."

For more information on the MCIA's Book Recycling Program, contact the Middlesex County Solid Waste Management at 732-745-4170.

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