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Plastic Bottle Recycling Campaign Boosts Triangle Area Recycling Rate

August 28, 2017 - “Your Bottle Means Jobs” (YBMJ) is an innovative campaign message recently used by the Carolina Plastics Recycling Council (CPRC) in the Raleigh Durham Triangle region to stimulate more recycling by connecting that activity with job creation. About 3 billion bottles are discarded each year, so the goal of the campaign is to get more bottles in recycling bins across North and South Carolina. The campaign completed its successful debut measuring a 2% increase in tons of all types of plastic bottles sold by local recycling processors during March through May 2017 when compared to the same period in 2016. Area recycling programs reported no other major changes in during that time period, so campaign leaders Chantal Fryer, Director of Recycling Market Development at the SC Department of Commerce and Blair Pollock with Orange County, NC, announce the outreach campaign had considerable regional impact.

The Your Bottle Means Jobs campaign was financed by a unique partnership of industry, recycling-oriented trade associations and local governments including Raleigh, Wake County and Orange County. Using billboards, radio, online ads, social marketing pledges and events, the campaign’s call to action for the region is that if each household in the Carolinas increased its plastic bottle recycling by just two bottles a week, that simple act could create 300 new jobs in the two-state region known for its large scale plastics recycling industry. The campaign estimates that in one year, two more bottles a week recycled per household would yield 30,000 tons of additional bottles, avoiding over \$1.3 million in landfill disposal costs and creating local jobs in the process. Campaign leader Blair Pollock said, “While North Carolinians throw out more than 70% of the plastic bottles we use, our local industries import recycled bottles from other states as well abroad to meet their manufacturing demands. This campaign points us in a new direction, fusing the environmental and economic benefits of recycling.”

To rollout the campaign, the CPRC conducted a training session on the campaign and offered local leaders a toolkit with brochures and posters, items made from recycled bottles, and social media as part of the effort incentivize participation. Prizes such as a \$500 gift card, a beach vacation and two recycled content gift baskets were offered to those who pledged to recycle. In addition to the more than 800 recycling pledges received to recycle two more bottles at home, on-the-go and at work, there were a million online Your Bottle Means Jobs ad views and 4 million billboard views.

YBMJ campaign champion Chantal Fryer said, “We are pleased to see a 2% increase in the plastic bottles recycled over the previous year– from 1,323 tons in 2016 to 1,349 tons in 2017. This is the equivalent of over 520,000 PET and HDPE bottles that can be recycled into new products like t-shirts, textiles, plastic pipe and other goods produced in the Carolinas. I’m excited to see the growth of the recycling and potential jobs as a result of the campaign.” Alan Goldman of Southeast Grinding, a company that grinds plastic bottles to prepare them for the next step of recycling, added, “Our company was proud to be a part of this innovative campaign to increase plastic bottle recovery and looks forward to celebrating future successes as the Your Bottle Means Jobs campaign expands throughout the Carolinas.” Approximately \$200 million in capital investment by recycling companies who employ more than 3,500 people in the Carolinas transforming bottles and other plastics to new recycled products.

By comparison, Columbia, SC, a city that did not have the Your Bottle Means Jobs campaign in that same period, reported a 12% decrease in bottle sales year-over-year. The City of Columbia had already completed residential recycling cart distribution and had no major program changes during the campaign timeline. Patrick MacDonald, manager of the Sonoco recycling processing plant in Raleigh, NC that handles many of the region's bottles, said, “Our company recognized real value in this promotional approach from the increase in bottle sales. Even with bottle prices low, we can make up some of that difference with the increase in volume. We know there are many more plastic bottles that can be easily recovered. If everyone does two more bottles a week, the impact will be enormous, good for the earth, good for our community and our company.”

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Established in 2011, the Carolinas Plastics Recycling Council works to raise awareness around the importance of recycling plastic bottles and to promote plastic recycling companies operating within the two states. In recent years, the CPRC launched the Your Bottle Means Jobs campaign, which aims to get more of the three billion plastic bottles discarded each year in the Carolinas back into the production cycle. Visit <http://www.yourbottlemeansjobs.com>.

FIVE FAST FACTS

- The Carolinas Plastics Recycling Council announced a two percent increase in plastic bottles recycled during March –May 2017 from its recent Raleigh-Durham Your Bottle Means Jobs campaign launch.
- Your Bottle Means Jobs call to action is that if each household in the Carolinas recycled two more bottles a week, it could help create 300 new jobs in the two-state region.
- Recycled plastics are turned into new products like t-shirts, textiles, plastic pipe and other goods in the Carolinas.
- People in the Carolinas throw away about 3 billion plastic bottles or 70% of bottles used on an annual basis.
- More than 3,500 people are directly employed in the plastics recycling industry in the Carolinas.