

Mountain Keeping Column 3-1-07

There'll Come a Day

By Cindy Ball

Indisputable facts: Americans make up only five percent of the world's population, but we produce half of the world's trash. Americans throw away enough aluminum every three months to rebuild the entire commercial air fleet.

High time we learned to do better. There'll come a day when we'll wish we had been more careful. We are stuffing landfills with perfectly recyclable materials.

I recently watched *An Inconvenient Truth*, an amazing movie. I left the theater full of emotion, feeling both inspired and defeated. I remember thinking, "Global warming ... we're doomed! This began over 30 years ago, and there's nothing I can do about it now."

But there *is* something I can do. Recycle. Use what has already been created, then reuse it. We can make the decision that *we* are going to "be the change that we want to see" (as Gandhi suggested). We must take responsibility for our own trash. We can't wait for an eco-hero savior to lift us out of this despicable mess. It's sad but also a relief that no Superman is going to yank us out of the garbage we've created, because *we have the power*, and we need to learn to use it.

Put things where they belong. Do I throw the empty water bottle in the trash or into recycling? We make that choice every time we throw something away. It takes no more time to do it right, once you set up your recycling space.

According to Suma Bolick, who works for Boone Recycling, about 73 percent of Boone residents recycle (you've all seen those blue recycling boxes on the curbs). Fantastic! Way to go, recyclers! But let's bring that number up.

For folks interested in setting up a residential recycling system, start by contacting Suma Bolick at 264-4885. You can arrange to pick up a blue recycling bin for glass, tin cans, paper (newspaper, magazines, and phone books), and plastics. BE SURE to remove and throw away all lids, rinse all containers, and flatten plastics. Place your blue container out on trash day alongside your garbage, and the recycling truck will come by and pick it up. Free compost bins are also available for Boone residents. Please call Suma Bolick ahead of time to arrange to pick up your compost bin, as they are often out of stock.

According to Watauga County recycling, all county residents can dump their first ton of trash per year for free. But you can also recycle corrugated cardboard, glass, plastic, aluminum, and paper at the county landfill and at all transfer stations throughout the county. At the Watauga landfill you can recycle tires for free, batteries (of all kinds) for free, and white goods (stoves, refrigerators, water heaters, etc.) for free (wooden pallets and metals cost per ton). The landfill will also soon recycle propane tanks for \$9.00 a tank.

Household hazardous waste can be disposed of on two days a year, in May and in October. Watch the local papers for dates and locations.

Eye glasses and hearing aids can be recycled in a small cardboard box sponsored by the Lion's Club in the Watauga County Library entryway. Cell phones and computer cartridges can be recycled at Staple's.

All over Boone well over 200 business offices recycle. We have recycling boxes at our library, at many offices, and in our post office (so as soon as you get that junk mail, you can give it to the blue box). Businesses can recycle office paper, including memos, mail, newspapers, magazines, brochures, file folders, phone books, manila envelopes, adding machine tape, time cards, multi-part forms (without carbon), legal pads, message pads and continuous-run computer paper with green or blue bars. Businesses can also recycle beverage cans and cardboard.

If you are already recycling everything you can and composting, give yourself a pat on the back. Thank you, and keep up the good work. If you are not, get started. Let's fight global warming together!