



Environmental Youth Corps workers Marina Biasutti and Bill Wray stand near a Wastewise display which shows how PET pop bottles can be converted into attractive fish mobiles and patio lanterns. The display promotes re-use of products rather than disposal.

Youth Corps members help raise environmental consciousness

By Dianne Cornish

Each week, Canadians take home 55 million plastic bags from grocery stores. Canadians use more energy per capita than any other people in the world. In Canada, a forest the size of Vancouver Island is cut down every four years. The average Canadian household throws away one tonne of garbage each year.

If Canadians find those statements shocking and are motivated to change their lifestyle to help minimize needless waste, Bill Wray and Marina Biasutti will have achieved much of what they hoped to as members of the Environmental Youth Corps.

Through the provincially-sponsored Youth Corps program, Wray and Biasutti are learning about the environment, as well as teaching others about it. Both students are working this summer at Wastewise, the waste reduction and recycling centre on Armstrong Ave., Georgetown.

During the past few weeks, the students have done considerable work on displays which appear in the education centre at the entrance of Wastewise. One display which has drawn a lot of attention from visitors is entitled: "Proud to be Canadian? Think Again!"

Scattered throughout the exhibit are pinned messages about how wasteful Canadian society really is. Plastic bags, energy consumption, forest depletion and garbage generation are just some of the topics covered in the display. At the bottom is another message: "It's time for change!!"

Wray, a 16-year-old Georgetown resident who will be entering Grade 12 at Georgetown District High School this September, said the display relates "the grim facts."

Many of the other exhibits do the same. The common thread throughout is that waste reduction and diversion are essential if we, and our environment, are to survive.

Biasutti, a 19-year-old Milton resident, has a keen interest in the environment and will attend University of Guelph in the fall. Not surprisingly, her choice of course concentration is ecology.

Both students joined the Youth Corps for a three-month job term to help raise community awareness about the environment.

While at Wastewise, the students have conducted tours of the 9,000-square-foot warehouse piled from

floor to ceiling in many sections with household articles like old furniture, dishes, doors, books and kitchen sinks. Another section of the building is devoted to recyclables, which aren't welcome in a blue box. These include margarine tubs, cardboard, mixed paper and scrap metal.

The whole set-up resembles a giant flea market and everything is either recycled or for sale. Furniture and dishes are 25 cents a pound, books are 10 cents apiece and clothing is \$1 a pound. Nothing—absolutely nothing—goes to waste at Wastewise, the students said.

A regular crew of five volunteers visit the centre each week to help

with sorting, baling or repairing household appliances so they can be sold. The project's manager Diane van de Valk and operations technician Debbie Smart are the only full-time employees at the centre.

Wray said Wastewise has three goals: to educate the public about waste generation; to divert reusable and recyclable materials from disposal, and to become self-sustaining by December, 1993.

Neither of the Environmental Youth Corps members need to be sold on the merits of Wastewise. They just want to get the word out and share what they know about innovative and effective choices with respect to waste diversion.

We welcome your letters!

Address them to The Editor, Halton Hills This Week, 232 Guelph St., Georgetown, L7G 4B1

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