

Freecycling – using the Internet to reduce the waste stream

Re-cycle, Re-use, Re-claim. Those are the 3 R's that have initiated a new movement in Plymouth and its surrounding communities. It has everything to do with getting a new use out of items that you no longer use or need, and nothing to do with money!

What am I talking about? The Freecycle Network. This network is made up of many individual groups across the globe. It is a grassroots and entirely nonprofit movement of people who are giving (and getting) stuff for free in their own towns. The mission of Freecycle is "to build a worldwide gifting movement that reduces waste, saves precious resources and eases the burden on our landfills while enabling our members to benefit from the strength of a larger community."

The Plymouth Freecycle group is moderated by local volunteers, Deb Betz (list owner), Barbara Clancy and Beth Zacchini. The Plymouth Freecycle group was started in June, 2006 to promote waste reduction and keep useable items from being tossed at the transfer station. Our Internet group provides individuals and non-profits with an electronic forum to recycle unwanted items. When you want to find a new home for something -- whether it's a chair, a fax machine, piano, or an old door -- you simply send an e-mail offering it to members of the local Freecycle group. Or, maybe you're looking to acquire something yourself. Simply respond to a member's offer, and you just might get it. After that, it's up to the giver to decide who receives the gift and to set up a pickup time for passing on the treasure.

Freecycle is NOT about giving only to the poor. It is NOT about getting as much free stuff as you can. It is NOT about getting things to earn money on the side. It is NOT about getting rid of junk that is better off in the landfill. So exactly what is Freecycle all about? It is about building a stronger community by giving to others items you no longer need, and about asking one another for items that you do need. Our main rule: Everything posted must be free, legal, and appropriate for all ages.

Currently there are over 600 members on the Plymouth Freecycle list. New members are joining daily. Examples of items that are being "gifted" are: children's clothing and toys, furniture, appliances, craft items, and home improvement items. No item is too big or small to request or to gift. I have seen boats offered as well as books wanted. Only tangible items can be offered or requested. This is not a swap list. Each item must be given and taken without condition.

How do you join? Send an email to: FreecyclePlymouthMAsubscribe@yahoo.com or visit www.freecycle.org to find a group near you. Get to know others in your community, and de-clutter your home as well. By doing both of these, you will help decrease the items that fill up the compactors at the transfer station.

The Reusable News is a monthly column by the Selectmen's Recycling Advisory Committee. This article was written by committee member, Deb Betz.