

A CLEANER CUP OF COFFEE

By Alfred J. DuBois, Jr.

In 1995 the City of Clifton achieved an overall recycling rate of 63 percent of its solid waste, reduced the amount of waste collected and transported to landfills by over 7,000 tons, and earned over \$535,000 from the sale of recyclable materials. A city of 12 square miles and a population of nearly 75,000, Clifton currently requires residents to separate and recycle over 22 different types of material.

Councilman Lester Herrschaff, chairman of the city's Recycling Committee has stated that "Clifton's recycling program teaches citizens the importance of caring for the environment through a hierarchical structure of solid waste management which includes recycling, vegetative waste collection, backyard composting, household hazardous waste separation, litter prevention and *most importantly* source reduction through the concept of "REUSE."

Goal: Pollution Prevention.

The Federal Pollution Prevention Act of 1990 established a new national policy for environmental protection: that pollution should be prevented or reduced at the source whenever feasible.... Pollution prevention includes practices that reduce or eliminate the creation of pollutants through increased efficiency in the use of raw materials, energy, water, or other resources.

In the March 1995 issue of *The Council On Packaging And The Environment* (COPE), the entire brochure was

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dedicated to Source Reduction: How it helps reduce the solid waste stream. COPE and its member organizations have defined "source reduction" as a "collection of activities and actions that, in combination or singularly, lead to a net reduction in the volume or toxicity of municipal solid waste. The aim of source reduction is clear: use materials and resources as efficiently as possible. A number of household cleaning products can now be purchased in refillable

- durable, quality products
- Buy reusable items such as: rechargeable batteries, pens, razors, cloth diapers and beverages in returnable containers
- Take reusable shopping bags to the store
- Purchase products made from recycled materials

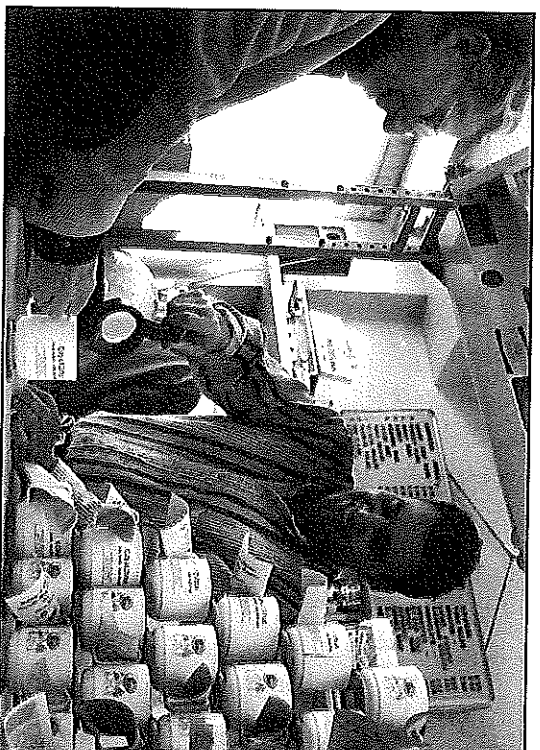
On February 8, 1996, Clifton expanded its pollution prevention/ source reduction programs, and launched a city-wide Reusable Mug Program.

Reusable Mugs

The Reusable Mug Program is a brand new Clean Communities project which is being implemented through the City of Clifton's Environmental Protective Commission and Recycling Office to educate the public about non-point source pollution, source reduction, the wise use of natural resources, and the need to control litter and reduce solid waste.

The program will be combined with a comprehensive educational outreach on the importance of "reuse." Citizens who participate in the Reusable Mug Program will be conserving energy and raw materials that would have gone into making disposable cups and lids. By choosing to "reuse" citizens also reduce the amount of street litter generated.

Eight hundred reusable mugs and brochures explaining the program were purchased by the Commission from a grant received through the Environmental Endowment for New Jersey Inc. The Environmental Endowment for New Jersey Inc. provides grants to support local environmental projects that will have direct benefit near the NY/NJ harbor estuary. Clifton's Environmental Commission received \$2,000 to imple-



Mike Kazerani, store owner of the Rainbow Deli at 292 Lakeview Ave, pours coffee into a reusable mug for Peter Abbate member of the city's Environmental Commission. A city survey estimated that 25 percent of mugs distributed to stores are being reused on a regular basis.

sizes or as concentrates, all of which eliminate the need for duplicate packaging or dispensers.

For the past several years, Clifton through its yearly clean communities brochure and recycling guide has encouraged citizens to adopt different types of activities that will decrease solid waste through various source reduction techniques such as:

- Donate or resell old unwanted appliances and home furnishings to thrift stores or organizations in need
- Buy less packaging and make buying preference known to merchants
- Buy in bulk quantities and shop for

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ment an educational program to alert the public about pollution to our waterways. Approximately twenty 10oz reusable mugs each were distributed to several "mom and pop" coffee shops throughout the city.

The mugs are given (free of charge) along with a brochure to citizens who purchase coffee and are willing to participate in the reusable mug program. Most store owners have agreed to sell a cup of coffee at a discount price each time a citizen returns with the mug. Store owners have also agreed to accept any reusable mug a citizen may return to the store. (One requirement: the mugs must be clean.)

The goal of this program is to form a partnership with businesses, citizens, and government to reduce waste, increase litter awareness, and keep litter (floatables) from entering catch basins which will eventually pollute our water and waterways.

Additionally, floatable street litter such as coffee cups and lids, styrofoam cups, plastic rings and bags, napkins, cigarette butts, flip can tabs, drinking cups, paper plates and napkins from take-outs, recyclable cans, plastic bottles and glass-if not properly disposed of are both aesthetically undesirable and a pollutant which affects our waterways.

Floatable materials in the water endanger marine life through entangle-

ment and ingestion; and these materials flow down through the Passaic River into New York New Jersey Harbor Estuary and eventually into the Atlantic Ocean.

However, mugs will reduce non-point source pollution. The Federal Clean Water Act, Environmental Protection Agency, and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection have stated that floatable items are a major cause of our non-point source pollution problems, and communities must reduce and control the amount of floatable trash entering our waterways. Non-Point Source (NPS) pollution contaminates our ponds, creeks, lakes, streams, rivers, bays, estuaries and the ocean.

Each one of us contributes to NPS pollution through our daily activities. The nine major avenues NPS pollution reach the waterways are:

- Pet Waste
- Motor Oil
- Paint
- Pesticides and Herbicides
- Household Hazardous Waste
- Street Litter (Floatable)/Plastics

These are called "non-point" because they cannot be traced back to a single point such as a discharge pipe from a treatment plant. NPS pollutant~ are usually carried by rainwater directly into waterways, or indirectly through storm drains and storm sewers.

In recent years, NPS pollution has caused fish kills, higher water treatment costs, and 70% of all beach closings.

However, Clifton citizens have taken

action to combat and reduce NPS pollution through the City's many environmental programs. Through the Clean Communities Program which is chaired by Mayor James Anzaldi, the Clean Communities Committee developed several programs to combat and reduce litter and NPS pollution.

On going programs developed by the Committee include: Adopt-A-Spot, Adopt-A-Store Front, Adopt-A-Storm Drain, Public Lands Cleanup, Vacant Lot Cleanup, Adopt-A-School, Neighborhood Cleanup Day, Illegal Dump Cleanup Day and Clean Campus Cleanup Day. During the past four years, these programs have involved over 6,000 students from 25 public and parochial schools yearly; 25 civic and youth organizations, and 175 businesses.

Community Cooperation

On March 8, 1996 one month after the program began, a survey was taken at each of the stores that received the mugs. It appears that about 25 percent of the 300 mugs that were distributed to stores are being reused on a regular basis. Some citizens are reusing mugs twice a day, for their morning and lunch breaks.

The members of the Commission wanted to learn how much tonnage could be diverted from the solid waste stream, so they collected various types of disposable coffee cups and lids from area stores and determined that "26" disposable cups and lids would weigh approximately one pound.

A person that drinks two cups of coffee/day x 6 days/wk would dispose of 624 cups/yr - which would equal 24 lbs of solid waste per/yr. The Current cost for collection of solid waste in the City of Clifton is \$35.00/ton and \$109.37/ton for disposal.

The Reusable Mug Program along with the City's Clean Communities Program will have a direct impact on the health and beauty of New Jersey's waterways. Mugs will also be distributed at environmental seminars, local Health Fairs, from the City Manager's Office, and residents may call the City's Recycling Office and pick-up a free mug. ❖

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CORRECTION

In the June 1996 issue of *New Jersey Municipalities* a caption incorrectly listed the amount of the initial concession check which North Brunswick Mayor Paul Matacera received from U.S. Water President Patrick Moffitt. The correct amount is \$6 million. We apologize for our mistake.