



A win-win: Help the environment and benefit charities

April 21, 2014 - Green Buildings

According to the EPA, discarded textiles represent 13.1 million tons of the U.S. municipal solid waste stream in 2011. Approximately 2 million tons, or 15% of that total, was recovered, which means 11.2 million tons, or 85% went to the landfill. That low recovery rate raises the question: Why are so many textiles trashed rather than recycled? Its simply a matter of convenience. It has often been more convenient for careless New Yorkers to throw old stuff away than to carry them over to Goodwill or Salvation Army. What is worst, is that unless your stuff is donation grade, Goodwill has no interest in taking them. So if you're moving, or you don't have a car, or there's no curbside pickup, your items end up being thrown in the trash and go into the landfill. So what does it all mean to me, an average person? Let's say you fill a small bag with 10 pounds of unwanted clothes, shoes, and toys. By donating this single bag of items you would have otherwise thrown in the trash, you contributed to saving the planet by: Preventing 36lbs of CO2 gases from polluting the atmosphere, saved 7,000 gallons of water and avoided the dispersal of insecticides into the air.

All told, N.Y.C. residents discard 193,000 tons of textiles every year, at a huge cost to taxpayers and our environment. But with a bit of help from building owners and property managers, landfills are now going on a diet. Unlike glass and aluminum recycling, which has only been in vogue for the past 40 years, the rag trade has been part of the American fiber for over a century. But a new crop of companies with a social enterprise heart and a philanthropic soul are coming to a building near you. Young upstarts like SpinGreen.com have taken the five boroughs by storm. Rather than having residents discard of their used clothing, shoes, linens, belts, towels and toys in the trash, which increases cost of sanitation, clogs up trash chutes and increases costs to the building of maintaining more unnecessary garbage, you now can sign up to have a textile recycling container for your building. The program is fully licensed and insured and offers an additional revenue stream to the building.

Yes now the building owner, property manager or coop/condo board not only saves money by recycling but generate an income and help the environment.

A true win-win! An easy and convenient way for your residents to recycle. Thrift store charities retail only a fraction of the donations they collect, selling or discarding the rest. Unless its high quality donation grade. Well not anymore. SpinGreen is a woman-owned recycling company that accepts donation and non-donation grade textiles. The good stuff benefits charities such as: American Diabetes Association, Madison Boys and Girls Club, GMHC, RAJE, and others. The stuff that is badly ripped, stained and torn is recycled into cool, new eco-products such as organic house and roof insulation. Zero textile mission accomplished! Resident approved!

Polina Groman is the CEO of SpinGreen.com, Brooklyn, N.Y.