

Valley News – Article published 10/31/2021

LEBANON — When Maria Parrado heard on the radio that she could finally get rid of her Styrofoam, she sprang into action.

She immediately contacted her husband, and they filled two vehicles with Styrofoam packaging they wanted to recycle. The couple, who recently moved from one home in Hanover to another, had a surfeit of foam from move-in necessities including a toilet and refrigerator.

“We were holding onto it to see what options we had,” Parrado said. “You can’t really do much with it. I always hated to take it to the dump. It takes up so much space.”

Parrado’s car was one of more than 100 that stopped by a Styrofoam recycling event Saturday at the storage unit facility behind Jake’s Coffee Shop on Mechanic Street in Lebanon. Organized by Sustainable Lebanon along with the Lebanon Rotary Club, it was modeled after an event Cindy Heath held in Cornish in August. That Cornish event proved so successful — 20 people filled a 10-foot U-Haul truck — that Heath approached Liane Avery, of Sustainable Lebanon, about doing one in the city to see if more people would be interested.

They were, as evidenced by a steady stream of vehicles over the course of two hours, at times numbering close to a dozen.

The cars started lining up well before the 9 a.m. start time and, while the volunteers expected a crowd, they still marveled at the number of people — and the amount of Styrofoam they brought with them. Volunteers also collected donations to help cover the cost of recycling and transportation.

John Yaccavone, of Meriden, stood under a bright blue tent directing cars down a row of self-storage units. He was there on behalf of the Lebanon Rotary Club, of which he has been a member for 45 years.

“Everyone has Styrofoam somewhere in their house,” Yaccavone said. “One guy said to me, ‘I have a closet I didn’t have before.’ ”

“Thank you” and “When are you doing this again?” were the most common refrains heard from those who dropped items off. The second proved a point that Heath made: People want to recycle Styrofoam and will do so if the opportunity presents itself.

“People want to be able to recycle all of these plastics, but there isn’t enough information to ‘go beyond the bin,’ so to speak, and recycle things that aren’t accepted at local transfer stations or recycling centers,” said Heath, who is the founder of the Living a Sustainable Lifestyle Tea and Talk program in Cornish and a member of the New Hampshire Energy, Environment and Climate Network. “We’ve struck a chord that’s inspired people to be part of the solution to plastic pollution. Now we just need to get the manufacturers involved.”

Much of the collected foam is going to a Massachusetts facility that accepts three types, which are melted down and repurposed. Everything else was headed to TerraCycle, a New Jersey-based company that specializes in harder-to-recycle materials. A decent amount of packing peanuts and foam wrapping — think the thin film that covers the screen on a new TV — would be headed that way.

“I’m surprised how many people have shown up and how much they’ve shown up with,” said Angela Nelson, of Croydon, a member of the Lebanon Rotary Club.

Around eight volunteers helped pack a 24-foot trailer owned by Bruce Bergeron, owner of the Upper Valley-based Jake’s Market & Deli convenience store chain. Bergeron, who has been a member of the Lebanon Rotary Club for 30 years, planned to drive the trailer to Massachusetts early this week. He was surprised by the amount of Styrofoam collected, especially after returning with his pickup truck full of more than 30 Omaha Steaks Styrofoam coolers that he had picked up from a Lebanon resident.

“They’d been collecting them for five years and filled up half of the attic of their garage,” Bergeron said.

Styrofoam coolers were among the most common items that could be recycled.

“It looks like people have been storing up,” Avery said, adding that one man she spoke to said he’d been holding onto Styrofoam for a decade. “There’s a lot of good Samaritans who have been holding onto it.”

Mark Maddox and his husband, Stan Talstra, drove from Saxtons River, Vt., to attend the event. In their car was two years’ worth of Styrofoam packaging. Maddox described it as “very hard” to find a place to recycle Styrofoam and the last time they did so they drove to a facility in Springfield, Mass. The couple welcomed an event that was closer to home.

“We’ve got to keep our eyes open for it,” Maddox said.

Styrofoam is a challenging material to dispose of. Area transfer stations and recycling centers do not have the means — or machinery — to collect and repurpose it.

In many ways, use of Styrofoam or similar plastic foams has been on the decline, Bergeron noted, especially in the restaurant industry. Jake’s stopped using foam cups around a decade ago and five years ago stopped using foam soup containers. But as Parrado noted, the material is sometimes inescapable, especially with larger appliances.

“Everything that we bought came with Styrofoam,” she said. “You don’t have very many options that are sustainable.”

Hillary Sundell, of Plainfield, shared the frustration that there isn’t a place to bring Styrofoam in the Upper Valley.

“I didn’t think there was any way to recycle it, so this is a ‘God bless,’ ” said Sundell, a member of the Solid Waste Group of Plainfield. “I think it’s a wonderful thing we’re finding ways to recycle, but wouldn’t it be better if we can find ways to reduce and use and then recycle?”

Laurie Halpern, of Norwich, dropped off foam that came from a crib and a big TV. It was “more than we can use in our garden,” she said — they line their gardenbeds with Styrofoam to keep animals from coming in.

As the two-hour event drew to a close, volunteers continued to pack the last of the materials into the trailer. People donated a total of \$678.75, Nelson said. She estimated that 50% to 60% of participants chose to donate, giving an average of \$10 to \$15. Volunteers were already talking about planning the next one. The interest from the community is clearly there.

“We encourage everyone to save their Styrofoam, and we’ll try to make it happen,” Avery said.

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