

IRNetworking

The Newsletter of the Institution Recycling Network

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OUR TENTH BIRTHDAY

It was ten years ago January that IRN made our very first shipments. And for some reason we're still at it. Many of you know this story, but IRN wasn't really our idea. We owe that to the small crew of recyclers who prodded us into existence: Bob Dombkowski from Smith, Mike Lyons from BU, Terry Pellerin from WPI, and much missed Butch Michitson from Northeastern. Coming out of a set of conferences we organized for the National Recycling Coalition, it was they who said, "Talk is fine, but if you really want to do something, take over my loading dock and get the damn stuff to market." Ten years down the road here we still are, getting stuff to market.

There have been some big milestones on the way. Last year we went over 20 million pounds of surplus property shipped to relief and development projects. We now have over 100 construction and demolition recycling projects under our belt with reuse+recycling rates that have gone over 99%. No one else comes close to that kind of experience or success.

But what's best about IRN – for us as we hope it is for you – is that the real leadership comes from you, our members and clients. It was you who asked for an alternative to throwing surplus furnishings in your dumpsters. It was you who pointed out the large quantities thrown out from construction projects and insisted we find a solution. You all are the committed recyclers; we just find ways to help you out.

That, in the end, is why we're still at it. We're here because we get to work with a great bunch of people who are committed to getting resources out of the trash and back into the economy. Your commitment is our driving force.

We look forward to the next ten years.

ON EARTH DAY: WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

April 2010 is also the 40th anniversary of the first Earth Day. Another good reason to reflect a little bit on what we do and why we do it. Not just us at IRN, but all of you who work every day to make this planet a little bit better for your kids and ours.

Not all of you know this, but one of us was a total goody-goody as a kid. He heard about this Earth Day thing in Philly and asked the school principal if he could have pass to go take it in. The principal said “No!”, so the kid in question cut school and took off for Earth Day anyway. The start of a long downhill slide.

That is, if you call it downhill to have a fun career working with great people doing stuff you really like that you don't have to be uncomfortable telling your kids about. And has job security as long as people keep making trash – like, forever.

And, in the end, is really important work. Earth is a little tiny planet spinning in a whole lot of empty space. The only resources we're ever going to have are the ones we have on that little tiny planet, but we're using them up like we had three or four planets to work from. If there's any hope at all for us people living on this planet, it's in finding ways to keep those resources circulating, forever. That is, it's in reuse and recycling.

We thank all of you who are part of the community who this little planet seriously. We thank you for caring, for your commitment, and for giving us the opportunity to do what we do.

A longer version of this set of thoughts closes this issue of IRNetworking.

HELPING HAITI

This is starting to feel like “IRNetworking: The Goopy Issue.” But the terrible situation which continues in Haiti after the January earthquake (and was actually pretty terrible *before* the earthquake) is a reminder just how fortunate we are in our material possessions, and how we too often take that fortune for granted.

There has been a backup of shipping containers with relief supplies slated for Haiti, and there are still delays getting materials into the country. But our relief partners are telling us that bottlenecks are easing, and they are starting to schedule large numbers of containers with durable goods like furniture and building materials. So again, if you have projects that will be generating surplus over the spring and summer – renovations or furniture replacements, or whatever – or stored surplus that you would like to make go away, please email or call and let us know. For those of you who are unfamiliar with IRN's surplus program, we prepare a specific proposal for each project, we make reuse just as easy as disposal, and while there's a cost it's nearly always significantly less than the cost of throwing surplus away.

GENERAL IRN NEWS

E-Waste in the News Again

Why does this keep happening?

Why do smart people choose to believe that there's money value in a computer or monitor so beat up and outdated they're throwing it out? Why do people choose to believe that if they see a “recycling certificate,” a piece of equipment has been properly recycled? Why do people choose to believe that there's no difference between the “recycler” who offers to pay you for an old monitor and the recycler who says he has to charge you?

See [The Boston Globe, March 3, 2010](#). In this instance a watchdog group tracked shipping containers filled with old monitors and TVs from Brockton, MA to Indonesia. Alerted, the Indonesian government opened the containers, saw hazardous junk, and returned the containers to Brockton. Sadly, in 99 cases out of 100, the containers would have entered the country and the TVs and monitors would have been smashed apart and burned for their metal content, with the waste (the part that didn't go up in black smoke) left in a ditch or a "landfill."

Real recycling of old electronic equipment costs money. There is no way around that. And there's no way around the old adage: "If the deal sounds too good, it is."

MASCO Sponsors Area-Wide Earth Day Event

MASCO is the area-wide management company for Boston's Longwood medical and educational complex. MASCO's role is to help coordinate many of the services that all of these organizations need in common.

One of these is recycling. IRN has worked with MASCO almost since our founding to help coordinate recycling initiatives in the Longwood area, and the 40th anniversary of Earth Day will see MASCO's most ambitious event so far. For several days surrounding Earth Day, a dozen different MASCO organizations will be encouraging their employees to bring in the old electronic equipment stashed in their garages and basements and closets and junk drawers – the stuff we all have and never know what to do with. The MASCO organizations will be adding more of their own. Then on April 27 IRN will do a grand sweep to pick up and tally the results.

Participating organizations include Brigham and Women's Hospital, Children's Hospital, Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Emmanuel College, Faulkner Hospital, the Isabelle Stewart Gardner Museum, the Mass. College of Pharmacy, Wentworth Institute of Technology, Northeastern University, Wheelock College, and the Winsor School.

Independently, the Mass. College of Art has scheduled its own school-wide electronics amnesty for Earth Day, and IRN is helping New England Delta Dental with the fourth in a series of hugely popular "weird waste" cleanouts open to all NEDD employees.

SURPLUS PROPERTY

20 Million Pounds and Counting

IRN's Surplus Program passed a major milestone in 2009: 20 million pounds shipped for reuse, in more than 1,600 shipments to 20 U.S. states and 43 foreign countries across five continents. Of course it's not IRN but the more than 250 organizations who have used the Surplus Program who deserve credit for the selflessness that makes the program a success. And for that, on behalf of our nonprofit partners, we offer each of you a huge vote of thanks.

Lahey Clinic Contributes Kitchen and Cafeteria for Haiti Relief

The Lahey Clinic (Burlington, MA) has contributed its entire kitchen, serving lines, and cafeteria furnishings to earthquake relief in Haiti. Lahey employs a large number of staff with Haitian ties, and when their cafeteria was dismantled as part of major renovations, Lahey asked IRN specifically if we could earmark the equipment and furnishings for Haiti. We were glad to be able to do so.

There's still a backlog of supplies for Haiti (where port facilities are only partly repaired), so we have packed five storage trailers with the Lahey equipment, which will be transferred to overseas shipping containers when a recipient location in Haiti is able to receive them. The shipment includes more than

200 cafeteria tables and nearly 500 chairs, serving stations, and complete kitchen facilities including ovens, grills, soup caldrons, prep tables, reach in coolers, freezers, and dishwashing line. In addition, Lahey employees on their own collected and contributed thousands of pounds of medical supplies including first aid kits, crutches, canes, walkers, etc., which will be shipped along with the kitchen and cafeteria.

BU Hoops Floor Gets a Second Life in Jamaica

When Boston University's Brown Arena was renovated back in 2005, the basketball floor was stashed away in a warehouse. It might have sat there forever, but last year BU leased the space for a movie set, and the floor had to go.

Rather than trash it or have it chipped for fuel, BU called IRN and we were able to make a match (through Partner Food for the Poor) with a school in rural Jamaica. We loaded the floor into a pair of shipping containers, and now it's living out its second life for new generations of Jamaican kids.

As IRNetworking goes to print, we're also working with Villanova University to repurpose their turf field to a new home, most likely in the U.S. Villanova is known best for its basketball program, but the football Wildcats are the 2009 NCAA FCS (formerly Division 1-AA) national champions. So some lucky school will be getting a field with a great pedigree. The Villanova project is our fourth turf field, and it's a reminder that we can make a match for just about any field in decent shape. Dana is the matchmaker, so please feel free to reach him directly if you have a turf field (or a basketball floor, or just about anything else from the athletic department) with reuse potential.

Welcome Kathy Halvorsen to the Surplus Department

There's a new voice and face in the Surplus Department, helping Mark Berry and Laura Ireland track the thousands of pieces of paper, information, and electronic correspondence that keep the program flowing. Kathy Halvorsen comes to IRN from McLane, the logistics company that stocks thousands of foodservice, grocery, and convenience stores across the country every night. She knows trucks, she knows scheduling, she knows detail, and she knows hectic, so she'll fit right in. The only thing we're worried about is working hours; we work days, when Kathy's used to sleeping. We hope she can make the switch.

Kathy has great presence and a great sense of humor. We know you'll appreciate her as a member of the IRN team.

CONSTRUCTION WASTE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

University of Connecticut (Daniel O'Connell's Sons) Wraps Up with 95% Reuse and Recycling

Daniel O'Connell's Sons wound up its gut-renovation at UConn's Neag School of Education Gentry Hall with a 95% reuse and recycling rate and four IRN LEED points (three for construction waste management, plus one for Indoor Air Quality during construction). Gentry is a four-story CMU structure with cast concrete decks, 100,000 square feet over four floors. The project was a complete gut back to structural elements with renovation including all NEW MEP as well as nonstructural partitions and finishes. Materials recycled included concrete, metals, gypsum, cardboard, wood, and mixed debris.

Salvage and deconstruction were critical to achieving a 95% recycling rate. UConn tracked and recorded all of the furniture removed from Gentry that (managed through their own very efficient surplus system). Meanwhile IRN spotted a trailer onsite to capture universal wastes, ceiling tiles, doors, and other salvage items removed by Daniel O'Connell's crews per IRN's Waste Management Plan. In all, salvage and deconstruction added nearly 20 tons at 100% recycling and reuse to project totals.

Reuse, Recycling, and Composting (!) at Harvard Law School North Hall (Bond Brothers)

In a project just started, IRN is working with Bond Brothers to recycle from the renovation of North Hall at Harvard Law School. The project includes selective demolition followed by installation of new elevators and fire suppression along with MEP and finish upgrades. One highlight of the project is deconstruction for reuse of cabinets and appliances from two kitchens. Another is composting of subcontractors' food waste, which is being segregated onsite and periodically wheeled across campus to be mixed with compostables from Harvard Law's kitchens. This is a new departure for Harvard and IRN, tackling one of the small streams of material that normally ends up as waste.