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Plastic bottle caps get special attention

By Nancy Arcayna

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Jun 01, 2009

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Thirsty Americans consume about 189 billion sodas, juice drinks and other beverages packaged in plastic or glass bottles and aluminum cans annually, amounting to more than 650 containers per person per year, according to the Worldwatch Institute.

That's almost two containers a day for every person.

Moreover, the majority of these bottles were trashed, resulting in a quarter of a million tons of aluminum metal, 1.5 million tons of plastic bottles and nearly 7 million tons of glass bottles in one year ending up in landfills.

The world's trash continues to mount, but every bit of cleanup helps and two organizations are trying to call attention to one small piece of trash often overlooked in recycle campaigns: the plastic bottle cap.

Many recycling programs still do not accept plastic lids, tops and caps because they are not usually made from the same kind of plastic as their containers.

"The caps are made from a different type of plastic from the bottles and has a different melting point," Suzanne Frazer explained.

The result is, people simply toss the caps away.

Beach Environmental Awareness Campaign Hawaii (BEACH) collected more than 2,000 caps littering the landscape during Earth Day campaigns, raising awareness of the impact of litter on our beaches and marine life.

Organizer Frazer said that researchers have found that all Laysan albatross chicks in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are consuming plastic fed to them by their parents, which forage for food on the surface of the water.

"Common items found inside hundreds of thousands of dead albatross chicks and inside boluses include bottle caps, lighters, children's toys, combs and toothbrushes," said Frazer. "Ingesting plastic can cause lacerations, blockages, starvation and dehydration."

Campaign efforts have kept thousands of bottle caps out of the ocean, and the public is invited to do its part as well.

Aveda Lifestyle Salon & Spa at Ala Moana Center, for one, recently started a "Recycle Caps with Aveda" initiative.

"Any cap that is made of rigid polypropylene plastic (recycle symbol No. 5) is accepted," Frazer said.

This includes caps from beverage containers, shampoo and food product bottles.

Still not accepted are pump sprayers, plastic lids from margarine containers or caps made of multiple layers of plastic resins or metal. Flexible caps are likely a No. 2 or No.



DENNIS ODA / DODA@STARBULLETIN.COM
Suzanne Frazer, left, has collected bottle caps that will be used for a recycling project with Aveda. She and Dean Otsuki are co-founders of Beach Environmental Awareness Campaign Hawaii (B.E.A.C.H.).





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4 plastic, which also cannot be recycled through the program.

AVEDA'S bottle cap recycling program, along with BEACH programs, aim to teach youths about the importance of taking care of the environment.

"Designated schools can act as drop-off centers," said Lititia Thomas, site manager for Aveda Lifestyle Salon & Spa.

The collected bottle caps get a second life as packaging and caps for salon products, including the company's 20th-anniversary shampoo bottles, which are made 100 percent from recycled bottle caps.

Miki Tomita, a seventh-grade science teacher at University Lab School, decided to establish a public bottle cap drop-off center at her school, putting bins next to the cafeteria.

"I wanted to raise my students and the public's awareness that bottle caps aren't recyclable. We try to use them in art projects, but I wanted them to learn how to reuse them in other ways," Tomita said. "They are learning the difference between recycling and reusing, which makes them more mindful of the recycling process."

BEACH was founded in 2006 by Frazer and Dean Otsuki and has focused on the issue of marine debris through educational programs, beach cleanups and litter prevention campaigns. For more information, visit www.b-e-a-c-h.org. Schools interested in starting a bottle cap recycling program can call 393-2168. More information can be found at www.aveda.com/caps or by e-mailing capcollection@aveda.com or calling (877) AVEDA09.

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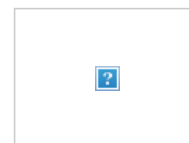


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