

The Community Collection Day “Win-Win”

Two Saturdays a year, in May and November, Arlington hosts a Community Collection Day at the Town Yard on Grove Street. This twice-yearly event draws large crowds and provides a resource for residents who want to recycle and donate items rather than toss them in the trash. Even better, this event benefits several Arlington organizations as volunteers from the Little Fox, Stratton Elementary School, Book Rack, Sustainable Arlington, and the Arlington Recycling Committee find the best possible local use for your items.

Community Collection Days started many years ago as a time to pick up a blue recycling bin and drop off an old TV all in one errand. Now we have expanded the list of accepted items so residents have options when cleaning out closets, basements and garages. Likewise, the Arlington Recycling Committee work has evolved to reduce trash tonnage by increasing recycling and making it easier for people to donate or drop off items that can be recycled or re-used so they aren't wasted in the incinerator.

Here is the story of how cleaning out your closet can help our town and making a few small changes to the usual process can raise money that stays in Arlington to benefit our schools and libraries. Consider the lifecycle of a t-shirt or a pretty dress that you no longer need. As you sort, the big categories are whether you have adult or children's clothes and if they are in great shape or a bit faded. The nicest things can be sold at the Little Fox Children's Resale Shop or the Fashion at the Fox sales to pay for expanded hours, programs, or other improvements.

When things are a bit beat up, it seems harder and for years it was a source of stress when I cleaned out a closet. I carefully considered each shirt or dress to decide if someone would want to wear it. If so, I'd send it to Good Will and hope it could be used again. Then last year a member of the Recycling Committee did some research and learned that a stained shirt could be shredded into usable fiber rather than incinerated. This was wonderful news and not widely advertised by organizations like Goodwill, which also sell nicer items. But textile recycling is big business now. Sheets, blankets, shoes, purses, towels, and clothing of any kind and in any condition (that doesn't include toxic contamination) can be used.

In fact, textile recycling is so popular now that organizations have expanded programs to accept clothes or bedding. One example is the book bin at the Stratton school (180 Mountain Ave). It's been there for years, collecting books (and CDs or DVDs) while the money supported enrichment events at the Stratton. And now that bin also accepts textiles, which generates a financial benefit here in town. Suddenly, I have great options for my sheets with holes and my rain jacket that no longer stops the rain.

So, as you get started Spring cleaning, please think of the good you will do by putting nice clothes in one bag for Community Collection and everything else in another for

the Stratton bin. Even better, the Stratton bin (or the Goodwill truck at Stop & Shop or Planet Aid bins) is there year round. Textiles that reach their useful limit in your home can get cleared out when you are ready.

The Community Collection is from 9 am to 1 pm on Saturday - look online for upcoming dates and important details at arlingtonma.gov/recycle. The event works best if we don't get moldy items (scary!) or encyclopedias that can't be accepted at book collections, so review what we can take. Please consider taking textiles that aren't right for resale to a drop-off bin so volunteers can focus on making the most of the clothes, books, accessories, toys and games, and shoes that you bring. In-demand items are soccer cleats or ice skates. Maternity clothes are perfect for passing along. Games and puzzles with all the parts/pieces can entertain another family and support a local library.

We hope to see many smiling faces driving up to our Community Collection Day. It makes the volunteers happy knowing they are helping you help the town.

Juli Brazile
Co-Chair, Arlington Recycling Committee