

United Front Recycling Program Wins Praise

A pilot program in household recycling at United Front Homes has won praise from the Greater New Bedford Regional Refuse Management District as “a model for other multi-family residences.”

“The United Front Homes staff and residents are exceptional in promoting recycling education and participation, particularly in their efforts to involve children and youth,” said Meg Hebert, District Recycling Assistant. “Their well-organized program serves as a role model for other multi-family residences.”

The 12-week Community Recycling Initiative began in July with the recruitment and training of United Front youth to serve as Green Team Leaders. Their mission was to teach households about recycling and motivate them to participate. They developed and distributed printed materials about recycling in Spanish, English, and Portuguese, and held special events to engage residents of all ages and backgrounds. They delivered recycling bins, and picked up recyclable materials for delivery to the UFH recycling center.

Recycling soon became a family and community activity. The older generation responded to youth leadership, recalling a time before the word “recycling” was familiar, but when families lived by the value of “use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without.” Even the youngest family members became involved, with preschoolers taking seriously their assignment of crushing clean cardboard boxes for the recycling bins.

Over three months, the volume of trash being recycled has approximately tripled. In June, households at United Front Homes were producing about 100 gallons of recyclables weekly in each category, waste paper or plastic/metal/glass. Now they are exceeding 300 gallons weekly in each category. More families are becoming involved every day, and as they learn more about recycling, they recycle even more.

Over the course of a year, that amounts to almost 40,000 gallons of trash kept out of the landfill and recycled for new purposes.

“The many benefits of recycling extend well beyond United Front Homes. This great program helps extend the life of the Crapo Hill landfill, which benefits the community at large and protects and improves the local environment,” remarked Marissa Perez-Dormitzer, Recycling Coordinator for the Greater New Bedford Regional Refuse Management District.

Funding for the United Front Homes Recycling Initiative was provided by a generous grant from the Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance (SEEAL), a fund of the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts. The goal of the project was not merely to increase recycling and reduce trash volume, but to promote urban environmental stewardship as a community value. Through community education and individual effort, United Front Homes residents have created cultural change and enhanced environmental awareness.