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Holiday Light Recycling Effort Returns to Minnesota Communities

RAM hosts Recycle Your Holidays collections beginning November 15 to celebrate America Recycles DaySM 2014

Statewide, MN, November 15, 2014 – On November 15 the Recycling Association of Minnesota (RAM) and its partners will host a two and a half month collection event for recycling holiday lights statewide in Minnesota, joining thousands of local organizers holding recycling events across the country to celebrate America Recycles Day, the only nationally recognized day dedicated to promoting and celebrating recycling in the United States.

RAM, ACE hardware stores, WCCO TV, and the Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) are once again working together to provide the Recycle Your Holidays™ (RYH) program to Minnesotans. RYH is the only holiday light recycling program of its kind in the country. RAM provides the collection bins and collection services for ACE store customers to recycle holiday lights during the holiday season. Vocational centers and their clients are contracted by RAM to provide the pick-up service and sort the thousands of pounds of holiday lights for the program each winter. The sale of the holiday light material pays the wages of the clients of the vocational center who are individuals with disabilities.

ACE customers can bring in their old or non-working holiday lights to be properly recycled at any participating ACE Hardware or other location listed on RAM's online interactive map. The map can be found at RecycleMinnesota.org. The goal this year is to recycle 100,000 pounds of holiday lights.

"This program is a win-win-win. The customers of local businesses like ACE have a free recycling option, valuable recyclables are kept out of the landfill and the program provides meaningful employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities at local vocational centers throughout the state of Minnesota," commented Maggie Mattacola, Executive Director of Operations for the Recycling Association of Minnesota. "This is the fifth year of this program and we are excited to be able to once again partner with CERTs, WCCO, and ACE for the collections."

For many Minnesotans, the house, porch, shrubs and trees are donned with holiday lights. Depending on one's holiday lighting enthusiasm, a home can save between \$10 to \$250 each holiday season by switching to LED holiday lighting. This is because, according to the Department of Energy, LED holiday lights save up to 90% of the energy used by traditional incandescent holiday lights. LEDs are also safer, sturdier, longer lasting, and easier to install.

We asked Alexis Troschinetz with the Clean Energy Resource Teams to weigh in on the impact of recycling old lights and upgrading to LEDs. “For every old holiday lighting string recycled and replaced with more efficient LED holiday lighting, 19 kilowatt-hours of electricity are saved over the course of the holiday season,” said Troschintez. “This is the same amount of energy as a common CFL household light bulb would use if left on for 24 hours a day for 2 months straight!”

RAM has recycled nearly 740,000 pounds of holiday lighting since the inception of this program. “If even half of these light strands were upgraded to more efficient LED holiday lighting,” Troschinetz explained, “Minnesotans are saving over 6.8 million kilowatt-hours and \$533,000 year after year. That’s enough energy to power the electricity of 601 homes for an entire year!”

“Keep America Beautiful proudly supports RAM’s America Recycles Day event and commends their efforts to promote recycling in Minnesota. Recyclable items we use every day, like that cereal box and milk jug in the morning, are recoverable resources that can be manufactured into new and valuable products. Together, we can reduce the billions of dollars worth of material thrown away each year and work to give that ‘garbage’ another life through recycling.”

For more information about recycling in Minnesota visit RecycleMinnesota.org.

America’s leading companies are proud to make America Recycles Day possible. National sponsors of America Recycles Day are: Amcor, America Chemistry Council, the Johnson & Johnson Family of Consumer Companies, Pilot Pen, and Waste Management.

About Recycling Association of Minnesota: The Recycling Association of Minnesota (RAM) is committed to promoting resource conservation through waste prevention, reuse, recycling, composting and purchasing practices using the most cost effective and environmentally sound methods available in Minnesota. We do this by holding conferences, convening educational forums, creating networking opportunities, disseminating timely information, providing public education, creating unique recycling programs and initiating cooperative dialogue among our diverse membership. RAM provides outreach activities to the public through the America Recycles Day campaign, our unique recycling programs, our website, recycled product educational kits, educational events and other means. RAM is the state affiliate of the National Recycling Coalition, Keep America Beautiful, and is the state organizer for America Recycles Day. RAM has more than 200 members from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. RAM is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

About CERTs: The Clean Energy Resource Teams connect Minnesotans with resources to identify and implement energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. CERTs is a partnership of the University of Minnesota Extension and Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, Great Plains Institute, Southwest Regional Development Commission, The Minnesota Project, and the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources.

About America Recycles Day: America Recycles DaySM is a national program of Keep America Beautiful, and is the only nationally recognized day and community-driven awareness event dedicated to promoting and celebrating recycling in the U.S. Since its inception in 1997, communities across the country have participated in America Recycles Day on November 15 to educate, promote environmental citizenship, and encourage action. Learn more at AmericaRecyclesDay.org.

About Keep America Beautiful: Keep America Beautiful is the nation’s leading nonprofit that brings people together to build and sustain vibrant communities. With a national network of community-based affiliates, we work with millions of volunteers who take action in their communities to transform public spaces into beautiful places. Through our programs and public-private partnerships, we engage individuals to take greater responsibility for improving their community’s environment. For more information, visit kab.org, follow @kabtweet on Twitter and like us on facebook.com/keepamericabeautiful.

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