



6R

THE MOVEMENT

REDUCE, REUSE, RECLAIM, REDESIGN, RECYCLE, RENEW

MOST VALUABLE PROGRAM 2008

WHAT: A monthly environmental craft project that gives teens the opportunity to reduce waste and reuse unwanted or discarded materials by creating unique, environmentally friendly products.

WHERE: In the Loft @ ImaginOn, the teen-only library located on the second floor of ImaginOn: the Joe and Joan Martin Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. ImaginOn is a collaborative venture of the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County (PLCMC) and the Children's Theatre of Charlotte.

WHO: Teens from throughout Mecklenburg County (including the library's teen "regulars" and those who have heard about various 6R Movement projects on the Web site, in the news, or from friends) and several Loft staff members have been involved to date, with more expected.

WHEN: This ongoing program began in October 2007 and continues with a new eco-friendly project each month.

Submitted by: Michele Gorman, PLCMC Teen Services Coordinator and Jesse Vieau, the Loft @ ImaginOn Teen Librarian

WHAT HAPPENED

Staff began the 6R Movement as a pilot project during Teen Read Week 2007. They kicked off their inaugural project by collecting more than 500 recycled phone books from local libraries and schools and stacking them in a pile in the Loft. In front of the pile was a box labeled, "Bright ideas?" and a challenge for teens to submit ideas about ways to use the recycled phone books. Loft staff received hundreds of suggestions by the end of the week. A "furniture" concept was the most doable, so over the next few weeks, several dozen teens came out to help build some eco-friendly furnishings: two chairs and a table unit built out of phone books! This recycled furniture currently resides in the Loft (durability: one year and counting), where it is used daily as one more interesting and surprisingly comfortable place to hang out in the teen library. After the success of this initial program, Loft staff decided that a monthly 6R activity would work, but it would have to be interesting, innovative, and somehow centered around the concept of renewal, rebirth, creation, and creativity. Monthly 6R projects in the last year have included:

PHOTO CREDITS: LOFT STAFF



▲ TEENS SHOW OFF THEIR FINISHED WORKS OF ART AFTER A WEEK-LONG ALTERED BOOKS CAMP IN JULY 2008.

- *Phone Book Redux*: Teens made furniture out of recycled phone books.
- *Geekwear Jewelry*: Teens made jewelry and key chains out of recycled computer parts, including pieces of motherboards, wires, and keys from desktop and laptop keyboards.
- *Cassette Wallets*: Teens made wallets out of recycled cassette tapes.
- *Cork It*: Teens made natural corkboards out of recycled corks from local restaurants and wine stores.
- *Flip this (Doll) House*: Teens rescued a time-worn doll house from the children's library that was going to be thrown out and rehabbed it or "flipped it" so it could have a second life in the children's library.
- *Tune In and Retune*: Teens broke unusable CDs and DVDs from the library's collection and used the pieces to create mosaic picture frames and furniture pieces.
- *Altered Books*: Teens used books weeded from the library's collection to create an original work of literary art.
- *Geekmarks*: Teens used motherboard pieces from recycled computers to make bookmarks, with internal wiring as tassels.
- *Recycled Playing Card Wallets*: Teens used recycled playing cards and book tape to create original pocket wallets.
- *EnviroJournals*: Staff collected recycled paper from throughout the library for several weeks. Then teens chose pieces from the recycled paper that had something interesting on the front and nothing on the back. They used the recycled paper (and a book-binding machine) to create a personal journal.
- *Mmm, Mmm, Flowers!*: Teens used metal cutters, recycled tin cans, acrylic paint, and wooden dowels to create metal flowers that will last a lifetime.
- *NewGen "Shrinkity Dinkity" Accessories*: Teens used clean #6 plastic (polystyrene), permanent markers, PrismaColors, and an oven (heated to 350 degrees) to create original belt buckles, bracelet charms, guitar picks, and luggage labels.

INSPIRATION

The idea for the 6R Movement came out of a discussion that Loft staff had with a teen about the "green building" concept of ImaginOn. The center is the first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEEDS) certified green building in Charlotte, which means it was designed for sustainability and is environmentally responsible. In collaboration with ImaginOn's green mission, the Loft staff wanted to create an ongoing, eco-friendly program that would help teens keep the environment in mind in everything they do—from how they dispose of materials to finding new and exciting ways to redesign them in order to create a new item or extend the life of an existing item. The Loft staff knew they wanted to do some type of activity for and with teens so they began with a pilot program to gage

DIRECTIONS FOR TWO OF OUR POPULAR 6R MOVEMENT PROJECTS

RECYCLED PLAYING CARD WALLETS

Supplies: recycled playing cards, four-inch book tape or clear shelf liner paper, and scissors.

Most of us have an almost-but-not-quite-complete deck of cards laying in a junk drawer at home somewhere. Don't throw these cards away—reuse them to create unique wallets. Gather sets of incomplete playing cards from your house, your colleagues, and your friends and neighbors; you'll be surprised how many people have an entire deck sitting around that's missing only one Queen! Each wallet needs six cards. Use four-inch book tape or clear shelf liner paper to create two "sheets" of cards. To create a sheet of cards, lay down one piece of tape or liner, sticky side up. Place three cards down on the sticky side of the tape, with about 1/8 inch between each card. Lay another sheet of tape or liner on top of the cards to seal the sheet. Do this twice. Then tape both sheets together on the bottom and sides. Fold into a third and put it under something heavy for a few hours to crease wallet.

GEEKWEAR JEWELRY AND KEY CHAINS

Supplies and Tools: small flat head and Phillips screwdrivers, metal cutters, metal file, a drill with a small bit, wire, and key rings.

Reclaim old computer parts and give them new life as high-tech jewelry and cutting-edge key rings that make great gifts perfect for both computer geeks and eco-friendly humans! Solicit old desktop and laptop computers that are no longer working. Put out a call to your library's Information Technology department, staff, patrons, and local businesses. You don't need special tools to take the computers apart, but you do need patience and a few very small screwdrivers. Offer to give the hard drive back to the donator so they know any data left on their computer will not land in the wrong hands. Laptops are especially great because they are easier to take apart and the keyboards are a huge hit for making jewelry and key chains. Once you have the computers disassembled, keep the wires, motherboards, and keyboards. Really—keep anything you can imagine a teen wanting to use to make a key chain or a piece of jewelry—you'll be surprised at their craftiness with computer parts. Recycle the rest of the parts with a recycling agency that deals with metals. To actually make the jewelry, teens can use a drill and some wire to create just about anything. The keys make good bracelets, rings, and key chains. The motherboards can be cut and filed to make key chains, or multiple pieces can be wired together to make bracelets.



▲ A VISITING TEEN DROPS BY THE LOFT TO CREATE TWO ONE-OF-A-KIND BRACELETS; ONE MADE OUT OF KEYS FROM A LAPTOP COMPUTER AND ONE MADE OUT OF PIECES FROM A MOTHERBOARD.



TEENS USE AN ELECTRIC DRILL FOR THEIR FIRST TIME WHILE CREATING UNIQUE JEWELRY OUT OF COMPUTER GUTS.



“We know that making a wallet out of a cassette tape or a flower out of a soup can is not going to save the world. Our hope is that this program is a catalyst. Our goal is to engage teens in a dialogue about how we use and dispose materials in a world of finite resources. Ultimately, we hope that actions speak

louder than words and that teens who participate in the 6R Movement develop a better understanding of how small actions today will ultimately impact the global environment tomorrow.”—Michele Gorman

THIS COLORFUL COLLAGE FRAME IS MADE OUT OF BROKEN CDS AND DVDS THAT WERE WEEDED FROM THE LIBRARY'S COLLECTION.



success. The greater idea behind the 6R Movement is to encourage teens to think about how their actions here in Charlotte impact the greater world.

WHO HELPED

For the initial project, the Phone Book Redux, staff put out a call to all twenty-four library branches for recycled phone books. During this time, an AT&T employee happened to see the massive pile of phone books, and after telling the district manager their plan for reusing the books as part of the inaugural 6R Movement project, AT&T offered the Loft @ ImaginOn a \$500 grant as seed money. Staff used the money to purchase tools and supplies needed to complete the phone book project as well as for future 6R Movement activities.

The community has also played a part in the development of this program. For every program the staff plans, they must solicit enough materials for many teens to participate and create their own unique works of recycled art. These recycled materials come from library community members, from people in their neighborhoods, and even from their virtual communities via The Freecycle Network®, a grassroots, national nonprofit movement that has an online presence in Charlotte. The mission of Freecycle is to create a network of local people who are interested in giving away (and receiving) free stuff. Their goals are to reduce waste, save precious resources, and ease the burden on our landfills while enabling members to benefit from the strength of their larger community. You can visit the Web site to find out if your city has a Freecycle group. PLCMC staff have also played a vital part in the development of the 6R Movement by contributing recycled materials to various projects. Several months before each project, Loft staff sends out a call to the rest of the library via the classifieds section of the PLCMC Green Newsletter. This tactic has allowed Loft staff to maximize donations while simultaneously gaining co-worker support and participation for the program. Members of the community who have seen some of the finished projects in the Loft have also delivered recycled materials like broken computers, corks, and CDs to be used for future projects.

PAYOFF

The impact of an ongoing program like this one is twofold. The immediate payoff is getting teens actively involved in the process of recycling and reusing unwanted materials to create new and exciting things. The secondary, long-term payoff is helping teens change how they view discarded materials. Ultimately the goal of this program is to help young people see that they can be an active part of the solution, impact the environment with small decisions, and be greener in everything they do, from taking out the trash to creating and wrapping presents for friends. The 6R Movement has helped spark an interest in local teens, many of whom will be the problem solvers of the future when it comes to protecting our environment and making the most of our limited natural resources.

HOW TO DO IT

Plan

For each 6R project that is planned, there are a few basic steps: Staff members need to select an environmental craft project, gather the necessary supplies, clear a work space, and get any administrative permission needed to block off a space for bigger projects within the library.

When deciding on an activity, Loft staff look through multiple resource books (recommended in the resource guide on page 307), search online for “environmental craft” ideas, and think outside-the-box about the unwanted materials around the library, like puzzles



and other board games' missing pieces, empty book tape rolls, withdrawn books, CDs, DVDs, and books on tape. They also make sure to ask teens for their ideas.

▲ WHO KNEW RECYCLED SOUP CANS COULD BECOME A WORK OF ART?

Prepare

Some 6R projects take more supplies than others. Basic supplies for most projects include tape, scissors, glue, a pair of metal shears, a flush cutter (small jewelry clippers), a screwdriver, paint, brushes, and tarps to keep the work area clean. The most time-consuming part of the preparatory process is gathering recycled or unwanted materials for the projects. Staff starts early and collects often, especially items like old playing cards, unusable CDs and DVDs, cassette tapes, and #6 plastic because they are used in abundance for certain programs.

Publicize

Loft staff realized early on that word of mouth is the best way to market any teen programs. In addition, they post descriptions of each upcoming 6R project on their MySpace page (<http://www.myspace.com/libraryloft>) and on the library's teen Web site (<http://www.libraryloft.org>). It has also been very helpful that the local newspaper, the **Charlotte Observer**, has been quite supportive of this Movement, including 6R projects on their community calendar and even covering various programs in their "Neighbors" section. Also pictures from the 6R Movement projects are available online (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/libraryloft>).

LESSONS LEARNED

Because the 6R Movement is an ongoing program, the Loft staff are always learning, tweaking, evaluating, and trying new things. They know that not every program is going to be successful, so trial and error is a large part of the process. As they continue with the program, their goal is to get even more teen input and continue to provide teens with opportunities to challenge themselves, be creative, and think green. If they had it to do over again, they would spend more time thinking about how to incorporate more recycled or eco-friendly products into each craft. As they move forward with the program, they plan to gather more recycled products as base materials and come up with alternative methods for creating materials, like fusing plastic bags.

RESOURCE GUIDE FOR BEGINNING YOUR OWN 6R MOVEMENT

BOOKS

- Berger, Shoshana, and Grace Hawthorne. **ReadyMade: How to Make [Almost] Everything: A Do-It-Yourself Primer.** Illus. by Kate Francis; photos by Jeffery Cross. Clarkson Potter/Crown, 2005. 208p. \$25. 978-1-4000-8107-3. Illus.
- Dodds, Steve. **Re-Creative: 50 Projects for Turning Found Items Into Contemporary Design.** HP Trade/Penguin, 2006. 160p. \$14.95 Trade pb. 978-1-55788-509-8. Glossary. Index. Illus.
- Matheson, Christie. **Green Chic: Saving the Earth in Style.** Sourcebooks, Inc., 2008. 240p. \$12.95 Trade pb. 978-1-4022-1082-2. Index.
- Rogers, Elizabeth, and Thomas M. Kostigen. **The Green Book: The Everyday Guide to Saving the Planet One Simple Step at a Time.** Three Rivers Press/Crown, 2007. 224p. \$12.95 Trade pb. 978-0-307-38135-4.
- MySpace/Our Planet: **Change Is Possible.** MySpace Community, with Jeca Taudte, Eds. The Bowen Press/HarperCollins, 2008. 176p. \$12.99 Trade pb. 978-0-06-156204-4. Glossary. Source Notes. VOYA June 2008. 3Q 2P M JS

WEB SITES

- The Freecycle Network.** <http://www.freecycle.org>
- Crafting a Green World.** <http://craftingagreenworld.com>
- Instructables: the World's Best Show and Tell.** <http://www.instructables.com>

RAVES

- "I think it's really cool that we can take junk and use it as something that's actually useful or helpful."—Carl Meekins, 17.
- "I like the idea of altered books; that we take old things and turn them into something new. I used an old '70s book and turned it into a scrapbook of the last two years of my life."—Heather Putnam, 18.
- "I didn't know you could make things out of old cassette tapes. When I go back home to my grandmother's house, I am going to take her old tapes and turn them into wallets for my friends."—Nia Okereke, 14.
- "6R is a creative and inspiring way to reuse objects and materials to make works of art. I never expected to use cassette tapes, or old books, or the inside of a computer to make cool things."—Sophia Vagnone, 12.
- A local family who homeschools its teens decided to recreate the 6R Movement's Phone Book Redux Project (furniture made out of recycled phone books) as a classroom project.
- A very angry parent of two teens walked into the Loft @ ImaginOn and said to her sons, who were supposed to have met her out front five minutes prior to this moment, "You two are so lucky you are doing something creative with a librarian and not just sitting on the computers. You have an extra fifteen minutes to finish up. I'll be waiting in the car." And then she walked away after letting us know how much she appreciated us providing opportunities for her sons to get involved in these kinds of creative, innovative programs!

—Compiled by Michele Gorman. ■