

## **CARING FOR CREATION NEWS**

### **Cork Recycling**

March 2009

What does the word “cork” bring to mind? Cork is such a commonplace material that many people use it without considering its source or understanding how it can be easily recycled.

Cork is harvested commercially from the Cork Oak tree, with Portugal producing 50 percent of cork globally. Cork forests provide homes for some endangered species. A versatile material, natural cork is used to make bulletin boards and wine stoppers, among its everyday purposes in many homes.

Cork is biodegradable, renewable, and natural. If cork is recycled, it can easily be recycled into other materials such as insulation, craft materials, soil additive, and flooring tiles. Even cork dust can be turned into fuel.

Although cork is one of the easiest materials to recycle, few places worldwide recycle cork. Australia and some European countries have municipal cork recycling programs. Residents can drop wine corks off at designated areas so the cork can be granulated and recycled into other products.

Cork recycling is still relatively rare in the United States. In September 2008, Annapolis, Maryland began a citywide wine cork recycling program. The municipal collection containers were decorated by area senior citizens and are placed at drop-off locations around the city. Other public cork recycling programs exist in Oregon’s Willamette Valley and California.

Hopefully, residents across the U.S. will soon be able to toss their cork products in with their other recycling. In the meantime, some companies, grassroots organizations, non-profits, and churches are starting a cork recycling movement in the U.S. Hope Church is now one of them!

Hope Church will be an organizational participant in TerraCycle’s Cork Brigade Program. The company started the cork recycling program to stem the tide of millions of corks going into landfills every year. Located in Trenton, New Jersey, TerraCycle was founded in a dorm room in 2001 by two Princeton University students who wanted to create a financially successful company that was also socially and ecologically responsible. The company produces products such as plant food made from worm castings, natural household cleaners, and shopping bags made from wrappers and recycled plastic.

Doing our part is easy. All you have to do is to drop your clean wine or champagne corks in the blue recycling bin in the lobby entryway. You can drop off natural or synthetic cork stoppers (no colored plastic stoppers, please). TerraCycle will pay the cost of shipping the corks to their recycling location. Once the project gets going at Hope church, corks will be collected and sent to TerraCycle about three to four times a year.

Our first collection will take place in March. Just drop your corks off in the blue container anytime.

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