Written by Lisa Doty Friday, 11 December 2009 12:17

## HAVE A "GREEN" CHRISTMAS Reduce, Reuse and Recycle this Holiday Season

Boone, NC (December 11, 2009) -- North Carolina, like the rest of the nation, produces more garbage during December than any other month of the year—about 25 percent more from Thanksgiving to New Years Day.

## You

can lessen your environmental footprint this holiday season by following some simple suggestions from Watauga County Recycling: Decorating and Wrapping

- If every American family wrapped just 3 presents in re-used materials, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields.
- When you go shopping, bring your own tote bags and avoid using plastic bags holding just one item.
- Give gifts in reusable shopping bags.
- Use wrapping paper made with recycled content paper.
- Have children make their own wrapping paper by designing and coloring on brown paper grocery bags or use old homework pages to wrap gifts. Grandparents love to see them. Sunday comics make colorful gift wrap for children's packages as do old posters, maps, old sheet music, and wallpaper scraps.
- For packing consider these alternatives: Popcorn (enclose a note saying birds can eat it), biodegradable starch peanuts, used packing peanuts or bubble wrap from a previous gift, or crumpled newspapers.
- Consider buying a potted tree that can be used every season as your holiday tree or purchase your tree from a tree farm rather than cutting one in the wild. Use trimmed branches from your tree for decorations for wreaths. Consider buying an artificial tree that can be used year after year.
- Decorate your home, tree and centerpiece with holly, cedar, berries, cranberries, popcorn, fruits and nuts, all of which can be composted or used for bird food after use.
- Adorn your gifts with these items: reusable items such as hair bows, ornaments, shoe laces, neckties, toys, bows and holiday cards cut up from previous years, scrap fabrics, lace, yarn, rickrack and seam tape, scarves, combinations of beads and buttons, and dried or silk flowers.
- Keep the fronts of old Christmas cards to use as nametags, bookmarkers, dinner place cards or postcards.
- Any kitchen gift can be wrapped in a colorful towel. Kitchen utensils can pop out of an oven mitt.
   Gift Ideas

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- Look for gifts with an environmental message: a nature book, a refillable thermos bottle or coffee mug, a canvas tote bag, or items made from recycled materials. Choose solar powered instead of battery powered products or ones that require no power at all.
- Consider gifts that keep on giving such as a compost bin, battery charger and rechargeable batteries, compact fluorescent lights, a perpetual calendar, or an erasable message board.
- Buy durable toys made from wood or metal so they can be passed down (become collectables) to others.
- Give two gifts in one by using baskets, scarves, or pillowcases to wrap gifts.
- Give home-baked cookies, bread or jams, or plant a tree.
- Give gifts that don't create any waste at all: park passes, music or sports lessons, memberships to an environmental organization, concert or movie tickets, dinner at a restaurant, or an IOU to help rake leaves or repair a leaky faucet.
- Give gifts that get "used up": candles, soap, or seeds for next year's garden.

## Reduce/Reuse/Recycle

- Make a New Year's resolution to start a recycling program at home or at work. Call 828-265-4852 for a free recycling bin and information on materials Watauga County accepts for recycling.
- Save and reuse gift bags, wrapping paper, bows and ribbons.
- Remember that much of the packaging from presents can be recycled such as corrugated cardboard and pasteboard. Most mail centers will take packing peanuts.
- Donate used toys and clothing to charity organizations.
- Recycle old electronics, computers and appliances at the Watauga County Recycling Center.
- Recycle your Christmas tree. Watauga County allows residents to bring in their tree be chipped into mulch for no charge.
- Recycle materials from meals, gifts and old catalogs. First call company and get off their mailing list to avoid future mailings. Unfortunately the high levels of ink and aluminum foils used in wrapping paper are not conducive to recycling. For more information on recycling in Watauga County, contact Lisa Doty at 828-265-4852. Have a very merry and safe Christmas!