

Transition Town Maynooth tackles waste diversion



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By Nate Smelle

The Lake St. Peter Community Centre was the place to be on Family Day thanks to a unique new event hosted by Transition Town Maynooth called the Waste Not Swap Shop. From 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. community members were invited to show up with clean usable items they no longer had need for that they could trade for other people's things. The event also featured a workshop on how to turn worn out T-shirts into shopping bags, and a free spaghetti lunch.

Transition Town Maynooth was established in November 2018 as part of the worldwide Transition Movement. Through organizing a variety of vibrant grassroots initiatives this movement aims to build community resilience in the face of such challenges as peak oil, climate change and economic crisis.

Lining the walls of the community centre on this day were tables packed with everything from clothing to stereo systems, that may have otherwise ended up in the landfill. Transition Town Maynooth member Ian Russell and his daughter Iona were two of the many community members browsing the items that were available. Recognizing the finite lifespan of the municipality's landfills, and the global need to transition away from fossil fuels, Russell said the event was a great way for people to reduce their ecological footprint while spending time with family and friends.

'It's about being less oil-dependent,' explained Russell.

'People will ask 'how do we do that?' By coming together and sharing ideas we can come up with better ways to share resources. A lot of our focus is on sharing resources. Rather than buying things new, we can reuse things ' like we see here you can use an old shirt to make a shopping bag so you don't have to use a disposable plastic one. Anytime we do this we stop polluting and filling up our landfills because we don't have to make new stuff. Oil is only going to keep getting more expensive and we can't keep doing what we've been doing forever.'

Pat McGillivray was one of the event's main organizers. She said the group came up with the idea to host the Waste Not Swap Shop because they wanted to educate people on how they can divert waste from the landfills. Pointing out how recycling has failed as a solution to waste management, McGillivray said people and municipalities need to work on developing ways to re-purpose and restore things instead of just throwing them away. While working a scale at the door, she explained how the group was measuring the beneficial impact of the event by weighing everything that came in, and everything people took home with them.

'Lots of stuff has come in and lots of stuff has gone out as you can see,' said McGillivray.

'There was a shop-vac, there was a bread-maker, there was perfectly good stereo. On another day all this stuff might have gone to the dump. It's sad what you see dropped off at the landfill.'

Hastings Highlands Councillor Dorothy Gerrow brought in two bags of material and ended up taking away a few items as well. In order to help build awareness of the importance of waste diversion, she said the municipality is planning an event called Trash Talk

that will be held in Emond Hall on June 13. As chair of the Waste Management committee, Gerrow said the more people think about and practice waste diversion the better off the community and the environment will be. Acknowledging the municipality's recent struggle finding a company to take its recyclables, Gerrow said, "Anything we can do to divert waste from the landfills is good news. Our costs as a municipality have risen so drastically, because the [waste management company] we were using in Renfrew shut the doors back in May, so we had to scramble to find somewhere to take our recycling. Now it is going to Quinte Waste in Trenton and our monthly cost is around \$33,000 for delivering our Blue Box materials. Obviously the more we can keep out of the landfills the better."

By the end of the day, McGillivray said 694.8 lbs of usable items were diverted from local landfills. To tackle challenges such as waste management, and others that communities like Hastings Highlands are dealing with, she said Transition Town Maynooth has formed eight operating sub-groups. According to McGillivray, each of these sub-groups focuses in unique ways on caring for each other and the land by creating patterns of living that are adaptable, fun, resilient and integrated with the wider community. These groups include: Community Integration; Food; Labour Pool; Speaker Series; Tool Share; Trading Post; Maynooth Community Centre; and, Peaceful Governance. Noting that the group meets on the fourth Saturday every month, McGillivray advised anyone interested in learning more about Transition Town Maynooth, or getting involved to visit their Facebook page, or contact ttmaynooth@protonmail.com.