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Contact: Anna Lieber
t 212-874-0548
e Public_Relations@napo-ny.net

June is National Recycling Month

NAPO-NY Professional Organizers recommend recycling solutions for your daily life.

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Some startling facts from all-recycling-facts.com: "A Styrofoam coffee cup discarded today will remain in landfill space for close to 500 years A plant takes a minimum of 15 to 20 years to grow into a tree, but takes less than ten minutes to be felled, and on an average one tree can yield about 700 paper grocery bags, which will be consumed in less than an hour by a supermarket!" □

It makes sense to recycle. As we pare down, simplify and organize to create more ease in our lives, we usually uncover excess items in our homes and offices. We find good clothing no longer worn, hobbies left behind, books already read, supplies never used. When renovating, we often have furnishings that no longer fit our style or space plan. Professional Organizers recommend designating a box or bag for donations while sorting. We feel good sharing items, giving them a second life and helping a worthy cause. In our daily lives, we need to recycle paper, metal and bottles to reduce consumption and preserve the environment. We can also support earth-friendly companies in our buying habits.

Sharon Lowenheim, President of NAPO-NY, says, "Many of my clients feel better about parting with unwanted possessions when I tell them that they can be recycled or donated to be used by others. Nobody likes the idea of their stuff ending up in a landfill, but thinking about someone else getting use from them, or new things being made from them, is often all the incentive they need to let them go."

Here are some tips for recycling common everyday items.

Donate or sell. Donate gently-used clothing, books and household items to your local charity shop. Some apartment buildings have a bin to collect nonperishable foods for the local food pantry. There are charities which recycle eyeglasses. You may also sell unwanted items at a yard sale or on ebay. Advertise working appliances, furniture or electronics on Freecycle. The recipient can pick up the item, saving you the trouble of transporting it.

Know recycling guidelines. Check current information online. Place plastic, aluminum and steel cans and paper in blue bags, clear bags or a covered can at curbside (labeled recycle), or use the special marked bins in your apartment building. Flatten cardboard cartons. Rigid plastics marked 1 to 7 may be recycled. No need to remove labels on jars. Just rinse and recycle.

Recycling don'ts. Light bulbs, plastic bags, Styrofoam, ceramics, window glass, mirrors and wax paper may not be recycled. Household batteries may be placed in trash except for button batteries, which may contain mercury and must be taken to a hazardous waste center. Check local guidelines as each county may vary.

Reuse and reduce waste. Use reusable bags for shopping. Recycle plastic bags for garbage rather than buying bags. Can a large appliance be fixed? Can an item be put to a new use rather than discarded? A tin can with the label is removed makes a neat industrial-style pencil cup. An old metal lunchbox makes a great first aid kit for the car, small sewing kit or place to store game pieces. Old toothbrushes can be used for cleaning small spaces. Juice glasses are the perfect size to hold tiny items like tweezers in the medicine cabinet. Use the comics to wrap gifts or cover textbooks. Be creative!

Paper. All paper that can be torn may be recycled including newspaper (without plastic delivery bags), cardboard, window envelopes, sticky notes, stapled sheets and even clasp envelopes. The exception is tissue or waxed paper. Buy household and printer paper with recycled content. Go paperless in banking, bill paying and investing where possible. Let go of subscriptions you never read. Go online to block catalogs and junk mail you don't want and think twice before bringing home papers, flyers and brochures in your daily travels. Recycle holiday cards for children's craft projects and scrapbooks. Some use the illustrations to create new cards. Sheets printed on one side may be cut up and recycled for note paper rather than discarded.

Electronics. Toner cartridges can be refilled and most office supply stores give you money back or rewards if you turn them in. Watch for periodic electronics recycling events in your town.

About NAPO-NY: NAPO-NY is the New York chapter of the National Association of Professional Organizers, the world's premier professional community dedicated to serving the interests and development of professional organizers. Founded in 1987, NAPO-NY is over 100 members strong and boasts a diverse array of organizing consultants, speakers, trainers, authors and manufacturers of organizing products who provide organizing services to individuals, families and businesses throughout the New York metropolitan area.

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