

# Community Partnerships with Meaningful Results

*Lisa Michaels*

With waste management issues making headlines nearly every day, strong recycling programs as a means of diverting municipal waste are vital. But, to achieve optimal waste diversion, another strategy is essential – reuse. In Ontario’s Region of Peel, an innovative three-way partnership is promoting reuse, and reaping benefits for both the environment and the community.

By 2007, Peel’s Waste Management Division will operate seven Community Recycling Centres (CRCs). CRCs are unique facilities characterized by convenience and accessibility to help meet the growing waste management needs of local residents and small businesses. The CRCs are an important component of the region’s 20-year Long Term Waste Resource Management Strategy, supporting a goal of 70 percent waste diversion by 2016.

The Brampton CRC, one of four community recycling facilities currently operating in Peel, was expanded to include a novel addition to the facility.

## Working Together to Recycle and Reuse

Goodwill Industries of Toronto presented a business plan for a Reuse Store at the Brampton CRC that was both resourceful and cost effective. Goodwill would operate the Reuse Store, accept reusable household items at no charge, and then resell the items at a modest price to the public.

Operation of the Reuse Store by Goodwill benefits the region in two important ways. Firstly, it eliminates the requirement for the region to staff and manage the Reuse Store. Secondly, forming a partnership that supports grass-roots community and social development enhances the region’s efforts to assist in providing the highest standard of living to all residents in Peel.

“This close collaboration between Goodwill and Peel Region has been a wonderful situation,” said Mitzie Hunter, Vice President of Marketing at Goodwill. “Our goals are the same – to service the community and put as much back into the community as possible.”

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Brampton’s Community Recycling Centre, one of four community recycling facilities currently operating in the Region of Peel, Ontario.

The Brampton CRC officially opened in July 2002, and includes a drop-off platform for recyclable and non-recyclable materials, a household hazardous waste drop-off area, an education centre and teaching garden. Goodwill manages the recycling centre’s Reuse Store and reusable goods collection station.

Once the partnership to collect and sell reusable items was shaped, the next step in the cycle was required – to use the sale proceeds and offer workforce development opportunities to people facing employment barriers in Peel Region.

## Partnering to Offer Job Training Solutions

In March 2003, Goodwill designed a Workforce Development Pilot Program to enhance and support the services currently provided by the Region’s Ontario Works Division. The program targets harder-to-serve Ontario Works clients who require additional support before transitioning into employment.

In Goodwill’s program, participants learn and develop skills relevant to the customer service field and gain experience in a variety of customer service jobs within Goodwill’s retail environment. During the first six weeks of the program, participants study theory in the classroom, including customer service, cash register operations, workplace health



The Goodwill Reuse Store helps Ontario Works clients learn responsibility and supervision, as well as all aspects of retail and customer service.

and safety, floor sales, computer skills and job search skills. The program then moves on-site to the Reuse Store, where the participants learn responsibility and supervision, as well as all aspects of retail and customer service.

Twelve participants were engaged in the first pilot program from March to September 2003. Each participant who completed the program found employment. The successful pilot project resulted in a contract to continue providing the valuable training module. The most recent intake of the program started on April 1, 2004.

“This is a perfect situation for all of us,” says Sandra Welch, Manager of Employment Services for Ontario Works in Peel. “Goodwill’s workforce development program provides our clients with essential job training, giving them an advantage when seeking job opportunities.”

“We believe we are most effective when we combine learning about work with the opportunity to practice skills on the job,” says Goodwill’s Mitzi Hunter. “Our lines of business provide the platform where participants can assess their capabilities, build confidence, develop their skills and increase their capacity to help themselves.”

While most program graduates are successful in securing employment, others continue to be supported in their job search efforts by Goodwill and Ontario Works.

“For six years I attended job clubs, seminars and workshops,” recalled Wayne Ruttiman, a graduate of the pilot program. “What I found at Goodwill was an environment that actually opened doors and, more importantly, a group of people who made it safe to walk through.”

Goodwill retail stores offer a positive benefit to the community by recycling a wide variety of donated goods and household items. The donated items are reused, and the funds from their resale sustain workforce development initiatives that meet emerging community needs.

“This joint venture has been very exciting,” said Andrew Pollock, Director of Waste Management. “Over the course of 12 months, we have successfully diverted over 350,000 pounds of goods from the landfill.”

### Providing Essential Services with a Bonus

As an extension of the partnership at the Reuse Store, Goodwill also provides janitorial services for Region of Peel waste management facilities, including the Bolton and Brampton CRCs and its material recovery facility.

The janitorial services contract with the region allows Goodwill to offer on-the-job training skills to a greater number of community members, while drawing on their existing expertise in providing high quality, cost effective janitorial and building maintenance services. This added opportunity represents a natural progression in the partnership between the region and Goodwill Industries.

Goodwill works with many members of the community – persons with disabilities, new Canadians and individuals who face many hurdles including limited education or lack of work experience – providing opportunities to learn, work and socialize. Goodwill programs enrich lives, promote personal growth, encourage the development of work habits, raise skill levels and increase opportunities for future employment.

“The benefits to the community through co-operation between Goodwill Industries, Ontario Works and the Region of Peel make this a win-win-win situation for all parties involved,” says Mitch Zamojc, Commissioner of Public Works for the region. “In particular, our community benefits from increased training programs offered to those not gainfully employed, allowing them solid opportunities to enter the workforce.” MW

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