

THE GARBAGE FAIR

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF SUCCESS!



IN THE BEGINNING . . . In 1990, someone whose name recedes in the veils of time organized a composting workshop at the League. People who attended believed that North Glenora should do more in the environmental area. Arlene Meldrum took up the gauntlet and started writing environmentally-oriented articles in the League's newsletter. Through her column, she found other North Glenorans with similar interests, including (though not limited to) Kyoko Kamei, Louise and Harvey Humbke, Gay Edmunds Lang, and Bill MacDonald.

THE IDEA IS BIRTHED . . . Bill and Arlene had a history of working together and began a new collaboration. At the time, the City was recycling newspaper only and public concern was mounting because the landfill was nearing capacity. The two North Glenorans developed the concept of a Garbage Fair: a one-day event in which people would bring stuff they'd normally throw in the garbage and instead have it re-used by others; the fair also had space for environmental information and the selling of environmentally-oriented products. Arlene was adamant about the use of the term Garbage Fair "so we could be fair about our garbage."

THE GARBAGE FAIR DEBUTS . . . The very first Garbage Fair was held in the North Glenora Community League Hall on Saturday, April 25th, 1992. Arlene and Bill were careful to restrict the list of collected items to those for which they had assured end users. The response was very positive. Enough people came to make it worthwhile without overwhelming the volunteers.



Early Day experience to current day –we’re collecting more variety and greater volumes and we’ve gotten better at doing it!



MASTER COMPOSTERS GET INVOLVED . . . In concert with concerns about waste management, the City started a Master Composter Program, whereby

residents could learn about composting and become neighbourhood-based sources of knowledge. In exchange for the education they received, they agreed to a certain number of volunteer hours for the City. Harvey Humbke, Bill MacDonald and Arlene Meldrum were the first North Glenorans to become Master Composters. And through that Program, Arlene and Bill took the idea of the Garbage Fair to the City. The City's Education Program Coordinators (in its Waste Management Branch) -- Ron Rault, then Gary Spotowski, followed by Karen Lewis Caron -- have been key supporters. Indeed, the Garbage Fair has been a great example of how the community and the City can work hand in hand.



THE CONCEPT TAKES OFF . . . Yvonne Bootsman from Crestwood was intrigued enough to apprentice at the next North Glenora Garbage Fair. In return, North Glenora volunteers helped Crestwood host its first fair. And for a while, we had a spring fair at Crestwood and one in the fall at North Glenora. By 1994, the City liked the concept so much that it wanted to get more communities involved. So Arlene and Bill were hired to write a detailed instructional manual and to put on workshops about how to run a Garbage Fair. By the year 2000, there were a dozen venues for Garbage Fairs in the City.

WE BENEFIT FROM OTHERS . . . All Garbage Fair dates continue to be advertised in the Master Composter Newsletters. Any Master Composter can volunteer for any Garbage Fair, though community leagues are encouraged to provide their own volunteers. A core group of Master Composters from various communities continues to volunteer at the North Glenora Fairs. Indeed North Glenora has become their alma mater.

Another reason for their continued return is that this kind of volunteering is just plain fun.

THE CONCEPT EVOLVES . . . The City helped to widely advertise the Garbage Fairs. At one point, the North Glenora Garbage Fair had between 500 and 600

attendees. It was too much for the capacity of the hall, the amount of stuff that was taken in and then needed to be properly distributed, and the volunteers. Then towards 2000, in response to pressures about waste reduction, the City tested the concept of well-advertised, centralized re-use roundups; one of them was held at the Aviation Museum Hanger. Huge numbers of people attended, leaving behind enormous piles of stuff. "It damn near killed us!" said Arlene. The volunteers dug in their heels and cut back on advertising. Now North Glenora's Garbage Fairs are well-attended and within the community's capacity to respond. They have returned to the place where they were born: the local community. This spring, the City will operate a central, year-round facility, NOT manned by volunteers, to complement community Garbage Fairs.

PASSING THE TORCH . . . While Bill MacDonald continues to help from time to time, his involvement as an organizer lessened over the years. Arlene continues to be actively involved and was nominated by then-Mayor Jan Reimer for the province's highest environmental award, The Emerald, in 2001. About a decade ago, Arlene took on a local apprentice who has become the new coordinator: Marg French. And since last year, the plant exchange is being transformed into a perennial exchange under the leadership of Annette Anderwald.

IN A NUTSHELL . . . In the first years, people were intrigued by the novelty of a Garbage Fair. They wanted to do something positive for the environment. The Garbage Fair made it possible for them to give stuff that was normally bound for the garbage a better home. And now, for North Glenorans, the Garbage Fair is a normal, regular community event that many people take for granted as always having been there. It remains what it has always been: a community-based, practical activity for keeping stuff from being wasted.

KEEPING THE GARBAGE OUT OF THE GARBAGE FAIR . . . It would be very easy for such a Fair to become a dumping ground for the things that no one wants any longer. But the Fair is not a landfill. So organizers ensure that the Fair doesn't collect anything for which there is not a known, interested end user. There aren't many community-based organizations in North Glenora (other than

Little Treasures Daycare) which are the recipient of the goods collected. However any individual or organization with a need can tap in and North Glenorans have requested items for programs of interest in the larger community.



THE LIST GOES ON . . . Some items are transformed by individuals, for example: Plastic grocery bags are torn into strips and crocheted into items like seat covers. Bread bag tags, bits of spoons, and puzzle pieces become earrings. Old keys are made into chimes and watches, into jewelry. Broken hockey sticks become furniture. Others items are taken by small companies or charitable organizations, for example: Small repairable appliances are made 'new' again. Eyeglasses are sent to Lens crafters for use in third world countries. Stuffed animals and paper tubes are sources of environmental stimulation at the zoo. Trophies are refurbished and then given out through the DARE Program.

CAN YOU TOP THIS? Peter Williams from Glenora was planning to move to Africa and didn't know what to do about a partially-made boat he had in his garage. Pat Bachen (then Scout Leader) happened to be volunteering at the North Glenora Garbage Fair with the Scouts that day – the Sea Scouts! They gladly took the boat and used the experience of bringing it to life and then sailing it, as



part of their program.

APRIL 14 2007 NGCL VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION EVENING

Arlene Meldrum, Margaret French and Bill MacDonald accept a Community Re-Use (Garbage) Fair Plaque presented by Amy Baxter, City of Edmonton, recognizing North Glenora for having pioneered this special project and keeping it alive for 16 years! WELL DONE!

**The Garbage Fair concept has become so popular in Edmonton that the City of Edmonton is opening a permanent site
And to think it all started right here in North Glenora:**



Opening July 7, 2007 the new permanent Reuse Centre will will collect everyday items five days a week, year round, and make them available to groups and individuals who will reuse them.