

Recycle Ann Arbor 2008 Earth Day Essay Contest – Runner Up Winner

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We Can Make a Difference – Recycling for Mother Earth

Have you ever thrown away something that could have been recycled? I'll bet you have, probably thinking it is no big deal. After all, what difference can throwing away a single piece of garbage make? Unfortunately, it isn't just one person throwing away recyclable materials. In America, 2,500,000 plastic bottles are used every hour, and most are just thrown away! Not recycling is becoming a huge problem, and it may be causing one of Earth's largest problems, global warming.

What is global warming, you ask? Global warming is the gradual warming of the Earth. Many scientists believe that global warming is happening because of the greenhouse gases we create. To make these cans, bottles, and other containers take fossil fuels. When those fossil fuels are burned they release the one thing we don't need, Greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide and methane. These gases trap the sun's heat on Earth's surface. If you think of it like that, it may not seem so bad, but this could be very big deal. The problem of global warming may seem important right now, but if it happens, it is no longer small problem. Ice caps will slowly melt, and when that happens our seas could flood people's home. Global warming can also cause the weather patterns to change. Places that grow crop could get a lot less rain, causing the crops not to grow. Many species could become extinct, with the changed precipitation and temperature. Hurricanes could become more common and powerful. All of these are possible if global warming happens.

By now you are probably asking yourself, how does recycling help stop global warming. Well, when something is recycled, it doesn't take as much energy from fossil fuels to create the new product. In fact, you can save 17 trees, 380 gallons of oil, 3 cubic yards of landfill space, 4000 kilowatts of energy, and 7000 gallons of water just from recycling one ton of paper. That equals up to 60 pounds less of air pollution. Less fossil fuel burned means less global warming from greenhouse gases. Not only that, but less trees would have to be cut down if we recycle. Since trees remove carbon dioxide from the air, more trees could help stop global warming.

Now let's head to a processing plant that produces aluminum cans. Those cans are made from the mineral bauxite, which is mined from ground and takes a lot of energy to be made into aluminum. For every ton of bauxite, only half of it can be made into aluminum. But if we recycle aluminum cans, it saves 95% of energy needed to make the can from bauxite! We could stop so much global warming by recycling aluminum cans!

Now consider this. That piece of garbage you threw away instead of recycling- would it have taken so much effort to recycle it? Say that piece of garbage was on

aluminum can. If you had just recycled that one can, you could have saved enough energy to run a television for three hours! Not recycling that can was like burning a half a gallon of gasoline. That one small effort could have saved that much energy, and stopped some greenhouse gases from causing global warming.

When it comes to recycling, you can recycle anything from plastic to aluminum, to paper to glass. Don't waste our valuable natural resources in landfills.

Global warming isn't the only bad effect of not recycling. We are using up space with landfills, and polluting the air when we throw away our garbage. Recycling is a good way to help stop these things along with global warming.

It's us that can make the difference. We can recycle to help the slow process of global warming. Who knows, maybe someday we will find a total solution for stopping global warming. But for now the most we can do is play our part in helping the Earth. Every person counts, and each thing recycled counts. So the next time you go to throw away something, consider recycling. Help solve the problem of global warming by doing your part in recycling.