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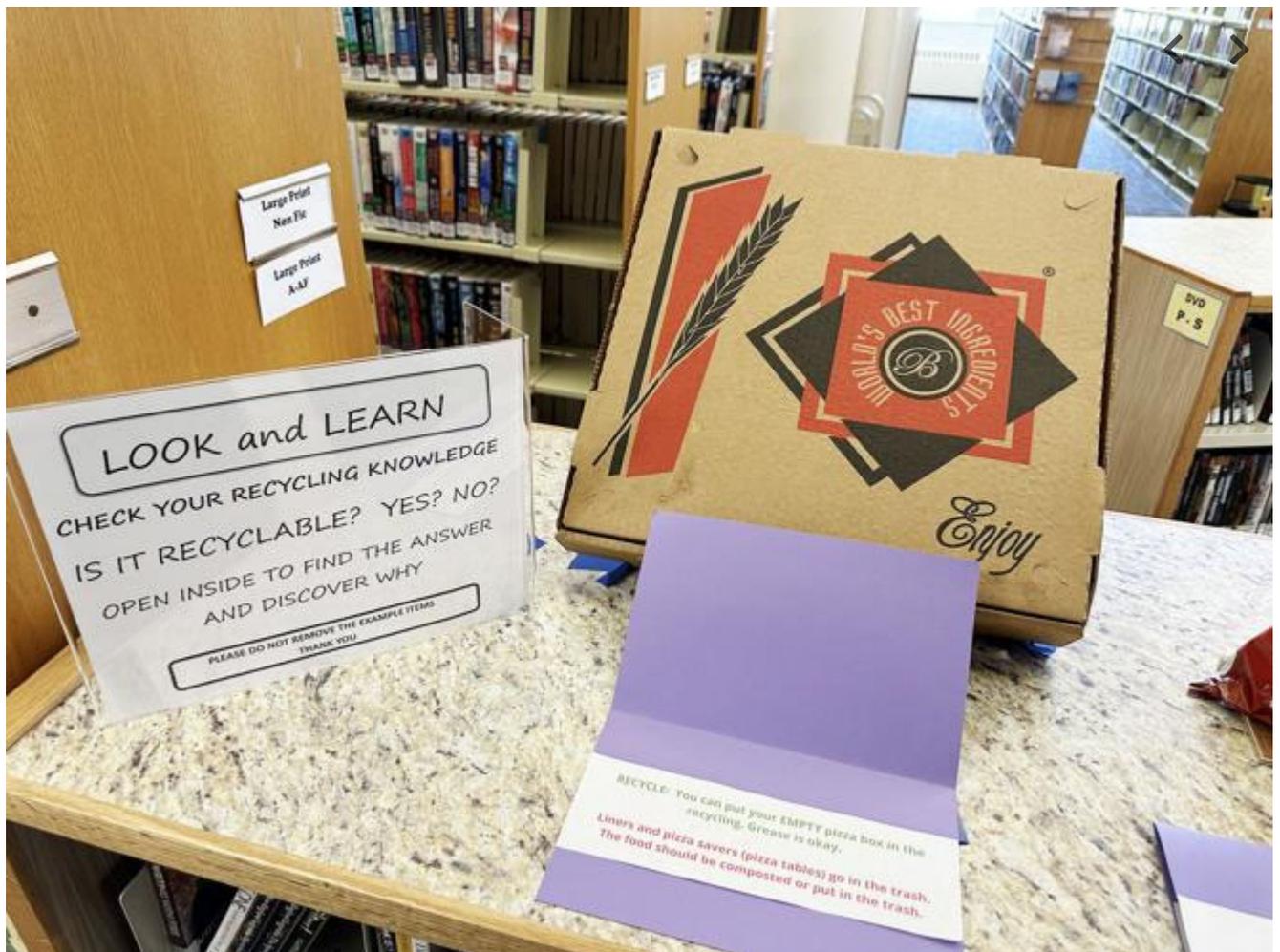
## Interactive Recycling Exhibit On Display At Bourne Library

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Each item displayed is paired with a card that, when lifted, reveals the answer to commonly asked questions about the item's recyclability.

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Do you know how to properly dispose of old string lights? What about garden hoses or batteries? Can kitty litter be recycled? What about the ever-confusing dilemma of the greasy pizza box?

If you are not 100 percent sure about the recyclability of these common household items, you might want to check out the new exhibit on display at the Jonathan Bourne Public Library, courtesy of the Bourne Recycling Committee. The exhibit, which will be on display for roughly the next few weeks before moving to its next local location, is an interactive educational experience for community members, both young and old.

The exhibit is just about two weeks old, committee chairwoman Heather DiPaolo said, and so far the committee is “thrilled with the response.”

On display throughout the library’s main atrium are more than a dozen common household items—think milk cartons, cardboard toilet paper rolls, and tissue paper—that patrons are encouraged to use to test their knowledge of these items’ recyclability. The answer, which is easily accessible inside the attached label card, offers a straight explanation on why an item can or cannot be recycled and gives simple tips on properly disposing of it.

“This is really good because it’s just facts,” Ms. DiPaolo told the Enterprise this week. “That’s all there is. There’s no interpretation, this just is what it is, and if you want to find out more information, go to [recyclesmartma.org](http://recyclesmartma.org).”

Recycle Smart is an online hub of information regarding recycling in Massachusetts. In addition to guides, quizzes, frequently asked questions, and video content, Recycle Smart has an online “recyclopedia,” a search tool that helps demystify recycling by providing directions for disposing of a number of common household items, like Keurig cups (trash) and black plastic takeout containers (also trash).



“I feel like we kind of brought ‘recyclopedia’ to life here in the library,” Ms. DiPaolo said.

“That was the thinking. And I learned something—I think we both did during this process—about the freezer boxes not being recyclable because of the plastic-y coating that keeps them cold; it doesn’t pulp down. And you’ve got the whole pizza box myth.”

Cardboard pizza boxes, for the record, are recyclable, even if there is a little grease on them. The best practice for recycling a pizza

The exhibit displays various household items and information cards explaining how and why an item can or cannot be recycled.

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box is to ensure that it is entirely empty of food and crumbs, and that the pizza liner and plastic table are put in the trash.

“Recycling can be complicated, the fine points of it,” said recycling committee member Jean Hills. “But the thing you have to remember is that when we recycle something in Bourne, it doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s something that’s recyclable all over the world... because recycling is a business, and they have to have a market for it. So rigid plastics, for example—I’m sure that’s recycled somewhere, but not here in Bourne.”

The best mantra to keep in mind, Ms. DiPaolo and Ms. Hills agreed, is one favored by Phil Goddard, the Integrated Solid Waste Management Facility’s manager of facility compliance and technology development: “when in doubt, throw it out.”

“It’s better to throw it out than to contaminate an entire load,” Ms. Hills added.

In assembling the exhibit, committee members not only spent a few weeks collecting trash but also put their heads together to compile a list of some of the most frequently questioned items that get brought up when it comes to recycling.

“We sat down here and said, ‘Okay what do people have the most questions about? What do we get the most questions about?’” Ms. DiPaolo said.

“[There are] so many little particular things, and every time we do this, we learn. I think when we were going through ‘recyclopedias’ coming up with things—‘is this recyclable?’—and it’s like ‘woah!’” Ms. Hills added.

The recycling committee has been leaning more into its main ethos, which is, as Ms. Hills put it, is to “get the message out.”

“That’s really what our purpose is for the recycling committee,” she said, “to get the message out and try to help.”

Both women are longtime members of the recycling committee. Ms. Hills estimated her membership began in 2017, and Ms. DiPaolo has been a committee staple for so long that she could not even offer an estimated starting point.

“She is the Bourne Recycling Lady,” Ms. Hills joked. “I try to be a conscientious recycler but Heather really is the epitome of it.”

Ms. DiPaolo laughed in response and said, “It’s just in my DNA.”

When it comes to recycling in Bourne, the committee intends to instill a passion akin to that of Ms. DiPaolo in the younger generations. Ms. Hills said that a few years ago, the committee would work with Bourne’s students to educate and get them excited about recycling. That programming has waned since the pandemic, but it is something the committee is looking to start up again. The upcoming school vacation week feels promising, especially with all the children’s programming at the library, the ladies agreed, and there is a meeting already on the books with members of the high school’s newly resurrected environmental club.

“Recycling has to grow; it has to grow but it has to grow properly,” Ms. Hills said. “One of our focuses has been the younger kids. They’re excited about recycling.”

The committee is not looking just to educate the town’s children, though; members are hoping the exhibit will raise awareness about recycling with all locals, from residents to town employees and everyone in between. And turning those dreams into reality means taking their show on the road—or at least, across the canal.

“We are taking this show on the road; it’s very exciting,” Ms. DiPaolo said. “We got approval from the new rec director, so we’re going to the community building, and then the town administrator gave us approval at town hall, so people will have many chances to see this exhibit. We’re excited about having a few different places.”

Ms. DiPaolo said the exhibit will likely last through the early spring into the end of April. The hope is that more exposure will further spread the committee’s message and help engrain it in the lives of locals. They are not expecting to change the world with one exhibit overnight; rather, they hope to make lasting changes through a series of “baby steps.”

“Not thinking too much at once about the big picture [is helpful,]” Ms. DiPaolo said. “What are we doing in Bourne? Well, we have single-stream recycling now. We don’t have plastic bags in town anymore. People are more consciously bringing their bags to the grocery. Just all these little things that we reduced that much, and you have to give yourself a pat on the back every once in a while.”

Demystifying recycling and its seemingly numerous rules is just one part of the process, the women said, which is a long and arduous one. But spreading awareness is worth it, because a little knowledge can go a long way when it comes to knowing what can and cannot go in the recycling bin.

“And that’s the key. People just don’t know, so let’s tell them,” Ms. Hills said. “It [recycling] has to be part of our everyday life because it is part of our everyday life and it has to be taken care of. We must take care of Mother Earth.”

Community members are encouraged to visit the recycling committee’s exhibit during library hours in the coming weeks. The library is located at 19 Sandwich Road and is open from 9 AM to 8 PM Tuesday through Thursday, 9 AM to 5 PM on Friday and Saturday, and 9 AM to 6 PM on Monday.

The recycling committee is also seeking new members. For more information, visit the Town of Bourne website.