

That’s a wrap: Three R’s of Christmas: reduce, reuse, recycle

BY JULIA SHAHEEN
Copley News Service

It’s easy to tell whom Santa has been good to each year.

“You can tell, stop to stop, or even in the areas of cities that you are working in, the type of holidays they are having,” said Ron May, route supervisor at J&J Refuse in Canton, Ohio.

With crumpled paper, ribbons and boxes spilling out of garbage cans, it’s easy to understand what May is talking about. After each holiday, the amount of trash generated per household goes up at least 10 percent in volume due to boxes and paper. The best way to shrink that number is to

recycle, according to trash haulers.

“We are seeing an upward trend of waste in the district, but we are seeing an upward trend in recycling,” said David Held, executive director of Ohio’s Stark-Tuscarawas-Wayne Joint Solid Waste District.

From 2003 to 2004, waste generated increased by about 2,000 tons, but recycling rose by nearly 850 tons.

During the week between Christmas and New Year’s this year, Jackson Recycling Station manager Fred Pisani expects to receive at least an extra couple of thousand pounds in boxes and wrapping paper.

Just two holidays ago, Pisani saw nearly 400 cars show up the day after Christmas filled to capacity with old wrapping paper, boxes and ribbons.

“We were shocked at first, but we’ll be ready for them this year,” said Pisani.

Usually, people are able to fit their trash into one large bin. The average household generates 30 to 60 pounds of trash a week. But during and after the holidays, that can increase as much as 10 pounds.

Held expects recycling to go up at least 20 percent during the holiday season. “In December, it’s due to people buying gifts, gift wrapping and the card-

board that increase the figures.”

And the increase lasts for a few weeks after Christmas, said Rod Coyle from Republic Waste Services.

“People open their Christmas presents and in some instances, they have to return stuff, and you get that increase for a few weeks,” he said. But by January, the amount of goods recycled drops significantly.

To lower the amount of waste, use recycled gift bags and paper or buy gift cards to reduce excess packaging, suggested Held. Or buy potted Christmas trees that can be planted outside after Christmas. Take paper,

boxes and Styrofoam to recycling centers or drop-offs.

Although some trash haulers take real Christmas trees, people can compost the trees or take them to yard-waste drop-off sites, he said.

Many UPS Stores take clean Styrofoam and packing peanuts.

Flattening boxes and putting paper in bags prevents everything from getting blown in the wind.

“We encourage the bags just because of the handling,” said Coyle. “It’s amazing what takes place over a period of time. People have learned what to do and what not to do.”

Recycling & Curbside tips

- Flatten and bundle cardboard together.
- Keep paper, Styrofoam and “peanuts” in a bag.
- Recycling centers accept paper, cardboard boxes, glass, plastic and aluminum. Yard-waste drop-off sites will accept real Christmas trees.
- UPS Stores will recycle clean packing peanuts, bubble wrap and Styrofoam.
- Another option is a Web site where you can list things you don’t want, and you want to give away. For more information, visit www.freecycle.org.

Healthy eating and activity alternatives for children during the holidays

BY J.M. HIRSCH
Associated Press Writer

As if keeping children fit and trim isn’t challenging enough, now you have dreams of dancing sugar plums to contend with.

But helping the tykes get through the holidays without developing bellies like bowls full of jelly will involve more than just keeping tabs on the sweets and treats of the season.

That’s because children’s physical fitness bottoms out this time of year, making it all the more difficult for them to burn off those extra Christmas cookie calories.

In fact, children burn only half as many calories in winter as they do in summer, says Dr. Cedric Bryant, chief exercise physiologist for the American Council on Exercise.

So how is a parent to handle December’s seemingly endless buffet of candy canes and gingerbread men? It’s all a matter of balance

“The whole issue of food becomes good or bad, and then the kid becomes good or bad because they ate the food.”

Lisa Young,
nutrition professor at
New York University

between calories in and calories out.

First, the calories going in. Health officials say the average child and teenage girl should eat about 2,200 calories a day. Teenage boys should get 2,800. But try not too obsess too much about the numbers.

It’s more important to set a positive tone about food, says Lisa Young, a professor of nutrition at New York

University who specializes in diet counseling for children. Parents who demonize food sabotage their children’s efforts at healthy eating.

“You don’t want to set up a whole negative persona about food,” she said. “The whole issue of food becomes good or bad, and then the kid becomes good or bad because they ate the food.”

Young instead urges parents to set a tone of moderation that includes clear expectations. For example, tell the children it’s fine to indulge, but that they should eat only one dessert per holiday event.

And be sure to make it clear when indulgence is and is not allowed. Treats at parties and special events are fine, but discourage random sweets at home. In fact, don’t keep them in the house at all, even as decorations.

Young also suggests keeping children away from the empty calories of sugary

drinks. Keep those calories for cookies, cakes and pies, which are more likely to leave the children satisfied.

When it comes to parties, avoid setting out platters of goodies, which encourage eating to excess, says Ellen Carroll, a spokeswoman and food development director at Cooking Light magazine.

Instead, give each child a party favor bag with individual portions of good and not-so-good treats.

Alternatively, set out platters of healthy treats, but serve only individual portions of sweets.

Children also never should be sent to a party hungry. Give them a healthy snack before they leave the house.

Carroll says routine can help, too. The empty days of Christmas vacation can lend themselves to all-day snacking. Combat that by setting and sticking to a schedule of meals and snacks.

Even with these precautions, it’s best to accept that

children will eat more than normal during the coming weeks. That brings us to how to handle — and increase — the number of calories going out.

Rather than obsess over every morsel your child eats, especially if you’ve made reasonable efforts to foster moderation, encourage more physical activity to burn up those extra calories.

Rule No. 1: Never use food as the focus of any children’s event. Instead of a pizza party, have a bowling or craft party. That puts the focus on activity, not edibles.

Rule No. 2: Set the right example. If you expect your children to be active, you’ll need to be active, too.

“We as parents tend to look at it as little down time,” said Bryant. “We’re just as guilty as the children of sitting in front of the television.”

But none of this means packing your children off to

the gym every day. And while a day on the ski slopes or at the skating rink is great, fitness can be plain old fun and games, too.

Any activity, from playing Simon Says to building pillow forts in the living room, counts in terms of burning calories.

Even activities that normally quash fitness can be put to good use, including video games. Some games now have motion-sensing pads that children must move around on in order to play the game.

Activity also can be meaningful. Carroll suggests bringing children to a homeless shelter or other charitable event where they can help out and start holiday traditions that aren’t food-centered.

“Kids are so full of energy this time of year that you’ve got to do something to redirect that energy to take some of the emphasis off the holiday treats,” she said.

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