



NEWS

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FOOD RETAILERS SUPPORT COUNCILWOMAN BROWN'S PLASTIC BAG RECYCLING RESOLUTION

PHILADELPHIA (December 3, 2009) — Today the Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association (PFMA) and the Pennsylvania Convenience Store Council (PCSC) announced their support for City Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown's Resolution concerning voluntary plastic bag recycling program in the City of Philadelphia.

"Councilwoman Reynolds Brown's Resolution captures the essence of what needs to be done by retail merchants to ensure that Philadelphia is a beautiful place to live," said David L. McCorkle, PFMA president and CEO. "Merchants need to promote the notion of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and this resolution will help to create that ethic here in Philadelphia."

Merchants who participate in the program will sell reusable shopping bags, which will reduce the use of plastic bags. They will also train their employees to use the fewest number of plastic bags possible at checkout and finally, retailers in the program will have plastic recycling bins available at each location for customers to return their used plastic bags, thus reducing Philadelphia's litter problem.

Penn Jersey Paper, a packaging and paper distributor in northeast Philadelphia, has been actively working with retailers to develop this recycling program. Rocco D'Antonio of Penn Jersey Paper said, "We are already collecting tons of used plastic bags at our retail locations and sending them to Goodwill Industries where they are prepared for shipping to a Virginia-based company which turns the used plastic bags into new products such as planks for outdoor decks."

Judy Spires, President of ACME Markets said, "ACME has been involved in recycling for a long time. Last year alone, we recycled 1.5 million pounds of plastic. That equals about 58 million recycled plastic bags. So, we are pleased that this idea is spreading to all segments of the retail community. Working together we can reduce litter and make Philadelphia an environmentally friendly place to live and work."

Karen Meleta, vice president, consumer and corporate communications, Waker/ShopRite, said, "ShopRite has been active in environmental initiatives for more than three decades – long before it became fashionable to do so. In 1992, ShopRite implemented a bag re-use program — one of the first of its kind in the Northeast. Customers who choose to use a non-disposable bag are rebated 5 cents per bag off their shopping order. In 2008 more than 22 million bags were reused by ShopRite customers and in 2009 that number more than doubled to 47 million, saving our customers more than \$2.2 million off their grocery bill. That means in the last two years ShopRite customers have kept 70 million bags out of landfills. ShopRite is also active in keeping other materials out of the waste stream. Since 1977, ShopRite has operated its own recycling center in Elizabeth, New Jersey. The facility, which operates 16 hours a day, six days a week, recycles plastic bags, shrink wrap and corrugated card board. In 2009, ShopRite recycled 104,000 tons of cardboard, 2,398 tons of plastic film and bags, 788 tons of newspaper, 389 tons of office paper, 107 tons of metal and 1,696 tons of waxed corrugated. In 2006, ShopRite expanded its recycling program to include white stock pill bottles from its pharmacy department while in 2009 the program was expanded to include wire bound wooden crates."

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2-2-2 Voluntary Plastic Bag Recycling

Councilwoman Reynolds Brown's Resolution also contains a provision for consumer education, which will be initiated through Keep Philadelphia Beautiful.

"We will continue working with school children throughout the city to teach them about the importance of recycling and to create a new community norm where children understand the principles of good environmental stewardship that promotes recycling and using reusable bags at retail locations," said Phoebe Coles, executive director, Keep Philadelphia Beautiful.

The final provision of the resolution concerns keeping score, so retailers will be asked to track the amount of plastic that is recycled so that the city can measure its progress towards becoming the greenest city in America.

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The Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association/Pennsylvania Convenience Store Council is a statewide trade association representing more than 1,200 retail food stores, wholesale distributors and other associated business members throughout Pennsylvania. The association works to improve the public image, effectiveness and profitability of its members who operate more than 5,500 retail food stores.