



## Developing Professionalism – Part II

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### Responsibilities of a professional...

If you have not read the first article in the series on professionalism, do so now (*NAPO-CT News* – Sept/Oct issue) as this is a continuation of that commentary.

*“Professional Organizers must be ready to contribute to society beyond their business life. They need to provide service to the local community through volunteer efforts as well as fulfill civic responsibilities as a voter, taxpayer and good neighbor.”*

So, what are the responsibilities of a professional? A few ideas would center on running your business with integrity, paying obligatory taxes, and voting on November 2—Election Day for US citizens. Volunteering for community activities and non-profit organizations is another professional obligation. The list could go on and on. However, I would like to make you aware of one very important measure of being a professional — being a global steward of our natural resources. November 15 is *America Recycles Day* and I would challenge all professional organizers to learn about, and take advantage of, the opportunities to recycle.

<http://www.americarecyclesday.org>

### Reclaim, Reuse, Recycle...

What did you throw away today? If you are like most people, you will have to ponder for a moment before you answer that question. In a lifetime, the average American will throw away 600 times his or her adult weight in garbage.\*

Over the years, our tendency to buy, and ultimately throw away, has increased exponentially. Though Americans represent a small portion of the world’s population, we produce over half of its total waste. In one day, we generate enough trash to fill the New Orleans Superdome twice.

The idea of being wasteful makes most of us uncomfortable; yet, we continue to waste because we cannot think of anything better to do with the overabundance. Professional organizers need to explore the concepts of recycling and educate clients to the possibilities. The basic principle behind *America Recycles* is that people can and should take responsibility for the trash they create. Used material is a resource—not a nuisance.

Recycling saves money and benefits everyone. Organizers understand the concept of using what we have and as professionals, we should encourage reuse. Many of our clients have things tucked away in the back of a closet that could be reclaimed. Hoarding is simply wastefulness. As long as something is in storage, it is of no use to anyone. When there is a need, organizers can solve it with available resources.

On a larger scale, we can help communities save by recycling paper, magazines, cans, bottles and plastic. The professional organizer’s job is to assist clients to develop a recycling system that works for them. Many consumer products would cost less if our nation as a whole recycled. Paper makes up more than 25% of our garbage, much of which could be diverted through recycling programs.

Recycling conserves natural resources. Statistics show that 64% less energy is required to produce paper from waste products rather than using virgin wood pulp. In the case of office paper, the equivalent of nearly three barrels of oil is saved for every ton of paper recycled. The manufacturing process from

#### Recycling facts!\*

- Twenty cans can be produced out of recycled material with the same amount of energy it takes to make one new can.
- Americans throw away enough aluminum every three months to rebuild our entire commercial air fleet.
- By recycling steel for one year, enough energy is saved to supply Los Angeles with electricity for almost 10 years.
- Five recycled plastic bottles make enough fiberfill to stuff a ski jacket.
- Incinerating 10,000 tons of waste creates one job; land filling the same amount creates six jobs; recycling the same 10,000 tons creates 36 jobs.
- Americans throw away enough office and writing paper yearly to build a wall 12 feet high stretching from Los Angeles to New York City.
- If everyone in the U.S. recycled just one tenth of their newsprint, we would save the estimated equivalent of about 25 million trees a year. One tree can filter up to 60 pounds of pollutants from the air each year.

\*<http://www.recyclingit.com/recyfact2.htm>

used paper rather than from trees requires about half the amount of water and creates 60% less pollution. Recycling one aluminum can will save enough energy to run a TV set for three hours or to light a 100 watt bulb for 20 hours.\*

### **Global Steward...**

Creating what we want from what we have is a rewarding form of self-reliance and stewardship. Discarded materials are free just waiting to be reclaimed. As much as we need to initiate large-scale efforts to recover wasted resources, professional organizers can contribute by developing a reuse reflex. Every possession has the capacity to bring pleasure as well as the potential to become joyless clutter. A professional is mindful of recycling. It benefits all.

This is the second article in the professionalism series.

© *Judith Kirk, owner of Organizing Resources, maintains two distinct aspects in her organizing business. She works with individuals who are eager to make changes in their life, both personally and professionally. And, she works with fledgling organizers who are interested in obtaining and maintaining a viable business. [www.OrganizingResources.com](http://www.OrganizingResources.com)*