



KENT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

New Exhibit Teaches Importance of Recycling

Kent County Dept. of Public Works transforms Recycling & Education Center with new interactive displays

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Grand Rapids, MI – Kent County Department of Public Works (DPW) recently finished educational exhibits that will improve the visitor experience at the Kent County Recycling & Education Center. Guests will learn what happens after the collection truck picks up their bottles, cans and papers, from separation to processing into new products.

“We have over 6,000 visitors at the Recycling & Education Center each year and they’re always amazed to see what happens after the recyclables get collected at their curb,” said Kristen Wieland, Kent County DPW Communications & Marketing Manager. “These exhibits will further explain how critical recycling is to creating local jobs and protecting our environment.”

Kent County DPW installed museum-quality exhibits and transformed the walls of the 5,000-square-foot space to teach youth and adult visitors about the history of waste, the importance of protecting natural resources and how recyclables get converted into new products. The exhibits also show how the Recycling & Education Center, along with other Kent County DPW facilities, are used to manage approximately half of the 2.1 million cubic yards of waste generated in Kent County. Visitors are also introduced to the DPW’s vision to reduce waste headed to landfills by 90 percent by 2030, with the Recycling & Education Center serving a critical role in achieving the goal.

The exhibits include samples of processed recyclables and new products made from recyclables from West Michigan companies including Schupan & Sons (Grand Rapids), Davidson Plyforms (Grand Rapids), Kellogg (Battle Creek), BPV Environmental (Byron Center), Exo-s (Coldwater), Polly Products (Mulliken) and others in Michigan and the United States.

DPW staff and a steering committee representing six community organizations worked with West Michigan-based exhibit design consultants, Xibitz, to determine audience, message and key takeaways from a visitor experience.

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“The Education Center is a testament to Kent County DPW’s uncommon vision and commitment to improving our community,” said David Prinsen, Project Manager for Xibitz. “It was a great privilege to work with their dedicated team to bring this project to fruition.”

DPW staff offer scheduled tours for groups interested in visiting. Every Monday between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. they also host ‘Imagine Craft Day’ where visitors can participate in simple reuse crafts and activities. Tour and program information is on the DPW website, www.reimaginetrash.org/learn. All programming is offered at no cost.

The Kent County Board of Public Works will host a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the new exhibits on September 6 at 10 a.m. at the Kent County Recycling & Education Center, 977 Wealthy SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504.

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