

Reducing waste lowers need for reusing, recycling later

The enormous discrepancy between the popularity of recycling as opposed to the more effective actions of reducing and reusing is something this column has tackled before. But, in the interest of Earth Month, it seems like a refresher is necessary.

Reducing, reusing and recycling are listed in terms of their importance and positive impact on the environment. Reducing personal consumption of goods is the best action because the resulting waste is never created.

In College Bookstore, an advertisement runs on a monitor in the floor (odd place for a television screen) that urges viewers to reuse and recycle. Why reduce was mysteriously missing from the equation is baffling, especially because it should be getting the most press.

After all, the best defense against the overwhelming amount of waste humans create is to nip it in the bud before it starts. Waste reduction is important because landfills fill faster and faster as humans consume more and more and therefore create more and more waste. This comes from leftover food, packaging, disposable items and countless other objects people deem as unusable or unnecessary.

Whether the item is biodegradable or not, it still probably won't break down in landfills because there is no sunlight and little oxygen once they are covered. With-

out these elements, the bacteria responsible for decomposition can't survive and the stuff stays intact.

The average person gets rid of 4.4 pounds of solid waste per day. This is a number that most certainly has the potential to be reduced by purchasing less stuff, purchasing stuff with less packaging and reusing the stuff you already have. For instance, according to *The Seattle Times*, one-third of landfill trash is from packaging. If the compulsion to buy can't be squelched, then products with little to no packaging should be the standard.

Now, reusing deserves some of the spotlight. While the advertisement in the bookstore highlighted reusing and recycling as the prime tag-team duo, the real pair that works together is reducing and reusing. What is unusable to one person — clothes that are too small, a bike frame without tires, those gifts from an ex-significant other that one has the urge to set on fire — all this stuff is something someone else could use.

And with reusing, no waste is created as long as the item continues to stay out of the landfill. It is the solution to the prob-

lem that arises when items are undoubtedly purchased but go out of style, get weathered or need some fixing to regain functionality. There are two Earth Month events that come to mind that cater to these ideas of reducing and reusing, but of course these ideas are scattered throughout other events and speakers. The first is the free store on April 17 at the West Portico of MemAud where people can bring their own stuff to trade with other students for their stuff. The second is a zero-waste Greek cookout for fraternities and sororities on April 19 at West Portico.

Hopefully this doesn't sound like a broken record, but seeing that advertisement was a red flag that the idea of reducing consumption was being left by the wayside. There are also tons of great events and speakers that are going on for Earth Month, so please visit www.ohio.edu/sustainability and take part in some of the "Bold & Uncensored" activities.



Cathy Wilson is a senior studying journalism and a copy editor for *The Post*. Send her an e-mail at cw224805@ohiou.edu.