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Health Department Promotes Plastic Film Recycling;
25 Drop Off Locations in Putnam

BREWSTER, NY— A staggering 100 billion plastic bags or more are thrown away each year by Americans, according to conservationists. Putnam County numbers may be impossible to get but one thing is sure: It is far too many. That is why the New York State's Plastic Bag Reduction, Reuse and Recycling Act went into effect back in 2009 and was updated in 2015 to add plastic films to the list of recyclable items.

“Recycling is a win-win-win scenario,” said County Executive MaryEllen Odell. “It reduces landfill waste, reduces our demand on oil, and it reduces litter, preserving our beautiful Putnam landscape, waterways and wildlife. Plastic bags are convenient, but their harms are real. The effects of clogged drainage and flooding alone make recycling a must, and now it's the law.”

“Less than 1 percent of plastic bags are being recycled, but we are trying to change that,” said Michael Nesheiwat, MD, Interim Commissioner of Health. “Everyone is used to recycling hard plastics, usually through curbside pick-up. However, plastic films must be recycled differently. They have to be brought to a drop off site, which all major stores should have.”

The health department has been working with stores in the county that are required by law to accept plastic films. All large retail stores, or chains with more than five smaller stores, must participate. Currently there are 25 drop-off locations in Putnam County, including Home Depot, Acme and Kohl's. A complete list is posted online at the PCDOH website.

“Plastic film recycling may require a bit of effort at first,” continues Dr. Nesheiwat, “but only until it becomes more routine. Think of it as an investment in the future—for our children. Then it becomes a little easier.”

Plastic films include many everyday items. Newspaper delivery bags, dry cleaning bags and shrink-wrap, in addition to the commonplace “carry-out bags” are some examples. Wrap from packages of paper towels, napkins, bathroom tissues and diapers; beverage case wrapping; shipping “pillows” and bubble wrap, as well as clean bags from bread, produce and sealable food storage bags—all these items should be dropped off for recycling. It is important to know that the recycling items need not be brought back to the store where they were originally purchased. Participating stores are required to accept all items together.

Next month is America Recycles Day and the health department will be visiting local drop off sites on Tuesday, November 15, to photograph residents as part of a “Caught in the Act” Recycling Campaign. Stay tuned or go online to the health department website, as details become available in early November.

The Health Department’s mission is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit the PCDOH website at www.putnamcountyny.com/health or visit the social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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