



Public Works Department
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Spring 2013



New life for old stuff!

By Chris Moran, Waste Reduction Manager

Last October, I hit the streets to participate in our Communitywide Garage Sale Weekend. I started early and, within a couple of hours, I had scored some amazing items that I didn't even know I needed! I bought a pair of



brand-new, lightweight barefoot athletic shoes for \$5 (\$88 retail); a vintage tea canister for \$5 (similar one on eBay for \$160); a Swarovski crystal runway necklace for \$3 (\$100 on eBay); a set of crystal drinking glasses for \$5; and... *drumroll please*...a genuine gold/jade bracelet for under \$7. During the entire morning, I parted with only about \$25 and came away feeling like I'd hit the jackpot. I'm not much of a shopper, but I love landing a good deal.

We surround ourselves with things. You can often tell what's important to someone by the things they have. Some grace their homes with artwork, such as pottery, paintings, or sculpture, while others decorate their gardens with ornaments or bric-a-brac. Some embellish themselves with jewelry or clothing, while collectors focus on particular objects, such as spoons, coins, or stamps—the possibilities are endless. Every time we buy something, we make a statement about who we are and what we support.

Our fast-paced, global market offers up billions of items to tempt us. Though

not adverse to big box store and mall purchases, I've found a more interesting alternative to the mainstream retail shopping experience.

Many, like me, have found joy in shopping at used or secondhand shops where, with some luck and a good eye, you can often find high-quality, unusual, and interesting items. In keeping with the three R's of Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle, this type of purchasing honors the workmanship of a bygone era or recirculates something that still has life left in it. The more we buy reused items, the less we buy new, slowing down the use of natural resources.

Santa Cruz offers an eclectic blend of secondhand shops, collectors' corners, antique stores, vintage jewelry shops, consignment shops, and a pawn shop. These businesses have unusual and special items that you might not find anywhere else. Shops like Mr. Goodies Antiques and Judi Wyant's Estate & Vintage Jewelry are locally owned and operated. Nonprofits like Goodwill and The Salvation Army thrive on your tangible donations and, in turn, create local jobs and contribute to our local community. Recently, Habitat for Humanity opened the ReStore, which has a warehouse full of amazing items to fix up a home. You'll find boxes of tile, used dimensional wood, rows of windows and doors, lighting fixtures, and grills—well, you name it. They have furniture, too.

Buying secondhand, gently used, or antique items is fun and smart, but have



you ever wondered what your stuff is worth? When your stuff no longer fits your lifestyle or if you have received a gift that just doesn't appeal to you,

MR. GOODIES



Kurt Haveman started out as a theme designer for restaurants, such as The Polynesian, Ports-of-Call, and The Queen Mary. He found that he was good at his trade and turned those talents into a business.

All items in Mr. Goodies come from our community. "Everything here has a story," said Kurt. "We offer unusual items—things you will never see again." At Mr. Goodies, you will find an eclectic assortment of: vintage Mexican jewelry, old whisky bottles, antique tools, African masks, Victorian lamps, comic books, cast-iron toys, and even a 35-foot American flag. There are sections devoted to Asian,

Native American, Art Deco, American primitives, World's Fair, Hawaiiana, militaria, and kitchen items. But the top-selling items are vintage pocket watches. Kurt pointed out a stunning railroad pocket watch.

Mr. Goodies also offers estate sale services. Mr. Goodies is like going to a museum, except that you can touch the items and, for the right price, they can go home with you. Browse Mr. Goodies at **1541 Pacific Avenue**.

it may be time to turn your stuff into cash. You can wait until October to sell during Garage Sale Weekend, but if you're looking for quick cash, a pawn shop might be the way to go. Check out Santa Cruz Pawn. The store is spacious and laid out in a clean and orderly fashion—there's so much to look at!

For buying and selling, you can also go online. Most people swear by Craigslist to find or sell almost anything, locally or regionally. I prefer the eBay auction format and enjoy the nationwide network where each winning bid transaction generates a mutual peer review that is available to all. It is amazing how smoothly transactions progress. You can converse with the seller or buyer, who can be anywhere, from Texas to Michigan or from New York to California. I've even purchased hard-to-find British bicycle decals from England. Participating in the bidding process is very exciting. Payment clears before you release your item so the process is very safe.

Have you ever heard, "You don't get something for nothing?" If you join Freecycle, you'll find out that isn't



true! Freecycle is what the name implies—all transactions are absolutely free. If you haven't joined the more than 9 million members, then you may be missing out on one of the best deals around—free stuff! Visit www.freecycle.org to learn more and join.

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Our dirty love affair with trash

Edward Humes' new book is a surprisingly entertaining overview of the wealth wasted and resources lost in America's trash. *Garbology: Our Dirty Love Affair With Trash* reveals the past and current status of our trash addiction in a way that keeps you turning the pages. He brings the subject to life through the stories of a dozen or so interesting individuals who are real characters. Likewise, the last part of the book highlights several people, organizations, communities, and nations that create less waste and deal with the waste that is produced in more productive ways.

In the introduction, Humes grabs our attention with the story of an elderly Chicago couple rescued from their trash-choked home in 2010. The nearly 6 tons of debris which made their home impassable were the result of just about 3 years of hoarding their trash. To Humes, such trash hoarders provide a lesson for the rest of us about how much of what we buy is wasted. He then introduces us to a woman who became China's first female billionaire by exporting used paper from the U.S. to China. In 2010, China's number one export to the U.S. was computer equipment, valued at \$50 billion. The same year, America's top two exports to China were waste paper and scrap metal, valued at \$8 billion. In Humes' words, "America, a country that once built things for the rest of the world, has transformed itself into China's trash compactor."

Beginning with the story of Big Mike Speiser, the colorful equipment operator who helps sculpt 13,000 tons of trash each day into a landfill cell 15 feet tall and the length and width of a football field, the book outlines in fascinating detail how a modern landfill works and the ways it is superior to the open dumps, open burning, and just plain littering of the past. But despite the use of liners to prevent water pollution, methane systems to produce energy, and daily cover to discourage vermin, potentially useful material is still being locked away and wasted. One number you won't forget after reading this book is the 102 tons of trash each American produces in his or her lifetime. Much attention is given to the value of this material and how avoiding that waste can be a way to improve our environment, reduce energy consumption, and improve our economy.

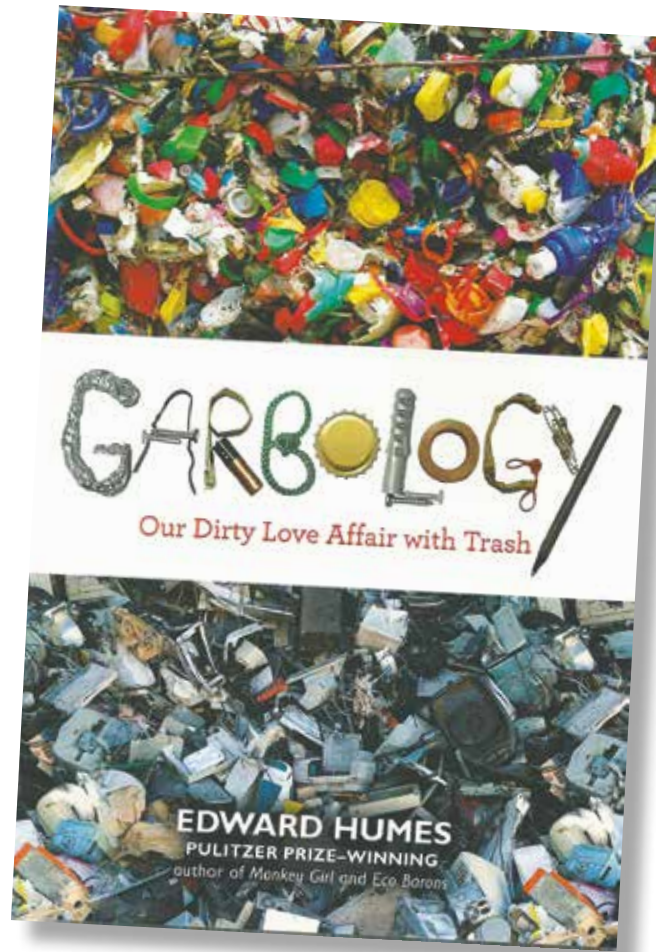
Humes suggests it is the very efficiency of our modern sanitation systems that keeps most people from realizing there is a problem. As long as the trash disappears from the curb, we don't have to question too strongly why we bought all of that stuff in the first place. He believes the idea of buying our way to happiness began with the post-World War II explosion of marketing and the consumer economy. Humes summarizes: "This was the moment in which the Depression-era version of the American Dream—which held that hard work, diligent saving, and conserving resources paved the road to the good life—began to fade, surpassed by the notion that the highest expression and measurement of the American Dream lay in material wealth itself, the acquisition of stuff."

While the first two parts of the book relate a bit of our trash history and raise our awareness about the impact of our current waste habits on the environment, the last part is devoted to "a small but growing number of businesspeople, environmentalists, communities, and families who see in our trash the biggest untapped opportunity of the century."

Most of these later stories are about innovative ways to reuse or recycle the material currently being wasted. However, the last is about Bea Johnson, a

woman whose family of four decided to avoid creating waste altogether. Their simplified, downsized lifestyle leaves them with a minuscule amount of waste that cannot be recycled, repurposed, given away, or composted. In one year, their household trash can fit inside a mason jar. That lifestyle also reduced their family expenses by 40% compared to what they used to spend. Humes says that the Johnson family has discovered less waste translates into more money, less debt, more leisure time, and less stress. "When you stop wasting, everything changes," said Bea Johnson. "There is a way back. And, if it can work for a family, it can work for a country."

Humes closes with a reminder and a few suggestions. First, the reminder—which he calls "the coolest thing about trash"—our creation of trash is one of the few "societal, economic, and environmental problems over which ordinary individuals can exert control." As he notes, "you can choose to be more or less wasteful." And his suggestions? They begin with a simple, "No, thank you." Refuse what you don't need. Choose used and refurbished items when you do need something. Replace bottled water with chilled tap water in a washable and refillable bottle. Carry your own shopping bags. And, finally, think about what it really costs to buy, maintain, and store goods.



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Condition Soil, Conserve Water, Coax Growth, Contain Disease

What can do it? Compost can!

When worked into the soil, compost improves soil structure, making clay soils looser and sandy soils tighter. As a result, compost helps both types of soil use water more efficiently, keeping clay soils from getting waterlogged and sandy soils from draining too quickly. Whether preparing the soil for vegetables, flowers, turf grasses, or new trees and shrubs, these characteristics of compost will help promote root growth, reduce plant stress, and reduce plant loss due to disease. It is also an excellent organic fertilizer which tends to stabilize the acid/alkaline balance of the soil. This can reduce or eliminate the need for first year fertilization.

Used as a top dressing on established lawn turf or as mulch over established beds, compost can reduce the need for watering and synthetic fertilizer. If coarser compost is used as mulch, it will also help suppress weeds in the garden.

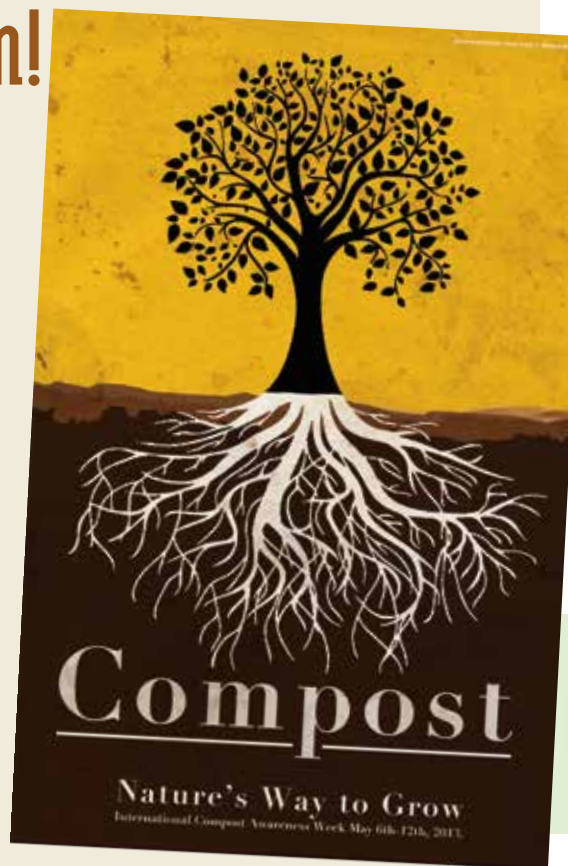
Best of all, compost is made from materials you normally have available. The process is technically the controlled aerobic decay of organic nitrogen and carbon. That sounds complex, but you actually have organic sources of nitrogen and carbon readily available. Organic sources of nitrogen include fresh grass clippings, green foliage, and weeds pulled from your garden, as well as

household food scraps. Organic carbon includes dried, dead branches, twigs, and leaves, as well as shredded paper, wood chips, and sawdust. These are mixed in a pile, compost bin, or tumbler, watered lightly during dry spells, and turned occasionally. During most weather conditions, your material should be moist but not soaking wet. If your pile becomes soggy during wet weather, turn and mix the material to add air and help it dry.

If you want to speed up the process, try to chop the organic debris into finer pieces, cover the pile to keep it warmer, and turn it more often. The use of a tumbler expedites the process by increasing the heat and making it easy to turn the material. It also has the added benefit of controlling pests and odors better than bins or open piles.

Give your compost up to six months to cook and cure. For faster compost, turn the pile more often. When the waste has become dark and crumbly, you have compost!

For more information, visit <http://epa.gov/recycle/composting.html>, <http://compostingcouncil.org>, or http://eartheasy.com/grow_compost.html. You can also contact our local Extension Service or call us.



International Composting Awareness Week is May 6-12, 2013. Learn more at <http://compostingcouncil.org/icaw>.

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A growing pile of gadgets

Electronic gadgets are all around us. According to the Consumer Electronics Association, the average American household had 24 electronic products in 2008. With the increased use of game systems, smartphones, tablet computers, and other devices, that number will continue to grow.

While electronics are handy, they are hardly benign. Electronics of all sorts, from TVs and computers to smartphones and tablets, contain heavy metals and chemicals which can pose a serious health risk if released into the environment. Lead, mercury, and cadmium, which are heavy metals commonly found in electronic products, can cause brain damage and respiratory illness if they are handled improperly. The plastics in consumer electronics contain odorless and tasteless chemicals that can accumulate in both the environment and the human body, damaging the liver and the thyroid in adults and putting children at risk of mental and physical impairment.

Responsibly recycling electronic waste reduces these risks. In addition, recycling reduces the energy expended and pollution produced during the manufacture of new electronic products. It also reduces the need to mine and process valuable new mineral resources. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, for every 1 million cell phones recycled, 35,274 pounds of copper, 772 pounds of silver, 75 pounds of gold, and 33 pounds of palladium are recovered. For every 1 million laptops recycled, enough electricity is conserved to power 3,657 homes for a year.

Over 100 million pounds of reusable materials are already recovered from electronic products annually. However, this represents only 15-20% of the electronic waste produced in the U.S. each year. Too many electronics remain in storage or end up in landfills where they don't belong.

If you have working electronics that you no longer want or need, consider selling them or giving them away to someone who will use them. Otherwise, be sure to recycle them along with broken or outdated electronic items. Not sure how? Contact us!



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Here are some tips that will make cleaning greener and healthier for your family:

- Think mechanical first. A scrub brush, a dish scrubber, and a retired toothbrush can provide a lot of cleaning power with no chemicals at all. Drain baskets keep drains free of debris that can lead to clogs.
- Use up chemicals that you have on hand before purchasing replacement products. If you have cleaners stored in multiple locations (some in the laundry room, others under the kitchen sink, and a few in the garage), find them and inventory what you have available.
- Consider creating your own cleaners from common household products, such as vinegar, baking soda, salt, lemon juice, and mineral oil. Many of these cleaners are easy to make, effective, and less expensive than pre-mixed chemical solutions. (Remember that even homemade cleaners can be irritating to skin and eyes. Always use caution in mixing, storing, and using homemade cleaners.)
- If you choose to purchase a cleaning product, choose the mildest and most benign chemical product available. Although it is not mandatory, a few manufacturers do voluntarily provide a complete list of ingredients. Try to select products that provide complete information on ingredients, offer the most clear instructions on use, and don't require extraordinary safety measures for use or disposal.

GREEN-UP YOUR CLEAN-UP

- When you purchase products or containers, look for recycled-content and recyclable containers. Rather than using paper towels, choose reusable towels and old rags. If you purchase paper towels, opt for those made from recycled-content paper.
- Buying concentrates reduces packaging waste. Some cleaning products are now sold in concentrated form; you finish making the solution by adding tap water at home. Other products, such as laundry detergent, are concentrated and ready to use when you get home. Remember—if you have softened water, you can use even less detergent.
- Keep unfinished products in their original, labeled containers. Never pour potentially harmful chemicals into food or beverage containers for storage. Store all cleaning products out of reach of children and away from pets. Do not store potentially hazardous materials close to sources of heat or in direct sunlight.
- Dispose of containers and unused chemicals properly. Follow the label instructions. If the instructions are unclear, call the manufacturer for more details or call us.

FAST FACTS



CAUTION

According to the Cooperative Extension System, the average U.S. household contains from 3 to 10 gallons of materials that are classified as hazardous.

ANTICIPATION

Have you ever noticed that wanting something feels better than having it? University of Missouri Professor Marsha Richins explores this phenomenon in her article, "When Wanting Is Better Than Having: Materialism, Transformation Expectations, and Product-Evoked Emotions in the Purchase Process," which was recently published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*. In three separate studies, she found that more materialistic consumers got a large "happiness boost" from thinking about a future purchase but, upon acquiring the item, saw those feelings of happiness dissipate quickly. Richins concludes, "Learning that acquisition is less pleasurable than anticipating a purchase may help [consumers] delay purchases until they are better able to afford them."



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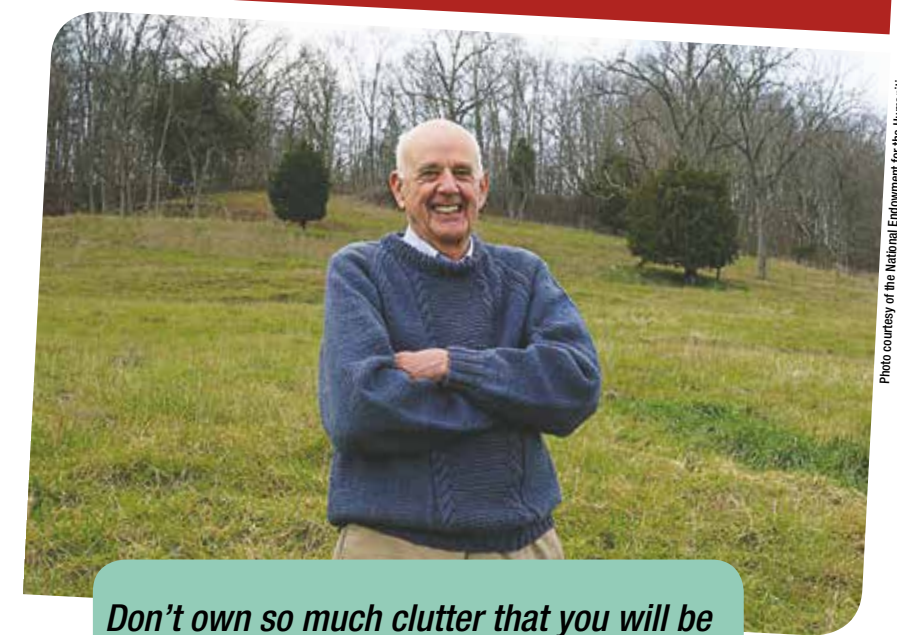


Photo courtesy of the National Environment for the Humanities

Don't own so much clutter that you will be relieved to see your house catch fire.

Wendell Berry, 1934- American poet and farmer

New life for old stuff!

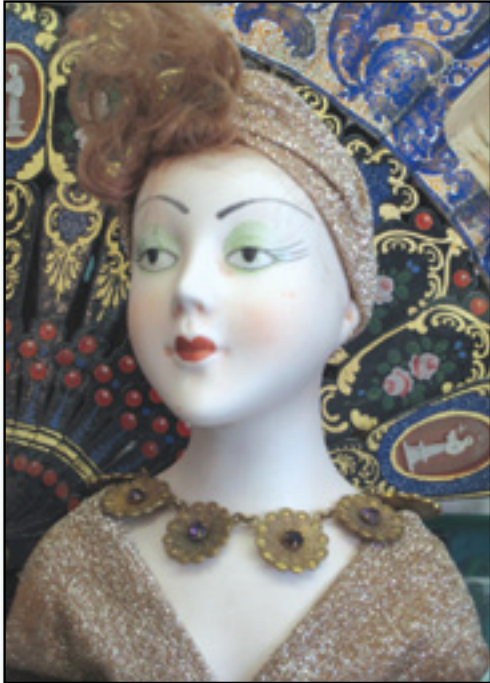
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There is no charge to be a member. It's free! Get it?

Consignment Shops: If your clothes closet starts to bulge and you want to make a few bucks, then it may be time to haul your clothes to a consignment shop. Consignment shops will evaluate your pile and price the goods. You get a portion of the sale price when the item sells, and they keep the rest. Call ahead because many consignment shops accept goods only on certain days and times.

Donate! If you are feeling generous, then donate your goods to local organizations, such as Goodwill or The Salvation Army. These and similar organizations help support those in need by creating jobs for those facing barriers to employment. And, the value of your donations is tax deductible!

And, of course, there is always the garage sale. Whether you hold a sale or visit sales, this is a fun and



interesting way of shopping for items that are usually way below the price you would find in stores. In October, we hold the Communitywide Garage Sale Weekend, so start setting aside sale items now!

Whether buying, selling, pawning, or consigning, try tapping into the vast market of used items for an experience that is personal, varied, and interesting. Who knows, you may come away with new treasure!



SANTA CRUZ PAWN



A family owned and operated business, Santa Cruz Pawn has been in operation for over a decade. It is currently the only licensed, bonded pawn shop in Santa Cruz. Steven Bumb, manager, said that his father "had been in the precious metal field and he loved antiques, so when the small pawn shop came up for sale, he bought it." He continued, "We have customers trying to make ends meet, small businesses in need, and people bringing items to sell. Some come to pawn or sell, while bargain hunters come in seeking unusual items."

Typical pawn loans are from \$50-\$200 with

interest rates regulated by the State of California. Items are kept for four months before being offered for sale. The majority of customers reclaim their property. Because of shows like "Pawn Stars," business is up and people are thinking twice before throwing something away. Their most popular sale items are silver jewelry, musical instruments, vintage swords, sports memorabilia, nautical themed items, and old coins.

Santa Cruz Pawn is a great place to visit. The store is bright, comfortable, clean, and welcoming at **1101 Pacific Avenue, Suite F.**

JUDI WYANT ESTATE & VINTAGE JEWELRY



As a young woman, Judi Wyant had a knack for knowing quality when she saw it. She turned that talent into a business that has prospered in downtown Santa Cruz for over 30 years.

The Judi Wyant Estate & Vintage Jewelry shop exudes quality. You can find Bakelite (early plastic) jewelry, 1800's mourning pieces (think Victorian with a touch of Gothic), Egyptian renaissance items, a few Roseville vases, and even some Indian baskets. But her specialty, her passion, is vintage diamond wedding and engagement sets. "As the sole buyer, I travel extensively to find these rings," she said.

"These old European diamonds are clean stones of exceptional and unusual character that have been hand-cut. They are museum quality." If that kind of quality sounds pricy, it can be, but Judi also believes in offering choices to customers within every price range. She especially likes helping couples just starting out. Ring sizing is included in her prices, and she has two jewelers on staff to help.

She also buys vintage jewelry pieces from the public. So if you're looking to make a statement, give Judi Wyant's a visit at **1532 Pacific Avenue.**

Celebrate Earth Day!



On Saturday, April 20, the fun begins at 11 a.m. and continues until 4 p.m. at San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz!

There will be all kinds of activities and crafts for kids, music, a teen recycled-fashion show, and many eco-friendly booths. Come hungry, so you can eat at one of the great food booths!

For more information, visit: www.ecocruz.org.

We want your suggestions, questions and comments!



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