



Contact: Lisa Sabourin
Tel: 231.759.0916 x 4003
Email: lisasabourin@eawm.net
Web: exchangewestmi.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HOW TO AVOID THE LANDFILL

Employers Association of West Michigan Announces EXchange

The saying goes something like this: one person's trash is another person's treasure. In the case of Nichols Paper & Supply, one customer's lab coats became tools for educators all over West Michigan.

The Employers Association of West Michigan (EA) is excited to announce The EXchange. Located at exchangewestmi.com, the EXchange opens up new possibilities for reuse of materials by direct sharing between businesses, municipalities and non-profit organizations.

The EXchange is a web-based and primarily ad-hoc system, supported by a pollution prevention grant from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Businesses and organizations can place notices of materials they are looking to unload within different categories on the EXchange site. These categories range from fiberglass to computers to solvents to construction or packaging materials. When an interested party contacts the supplier, the two of them work out the details confidentially, with no fees or hassle.

When a Nichols customer could no longer use gently worn lab coats due to cleanroom standards, they used to have to send them to the landfill because the snaps and materials were not recyclable. That did not mean the coats' lives were over, according to Renae Hesselink, sustainability coordinator for Nichols and chair of the EA's board of directors:

"If we don't do that with those lab coats, we end up sending them to the landfill, which is a waste and costs money to do so."

A little over a year ago, Renae put a call out on Facebook and to the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District to see if any instructors were interested in giving the lightly-used coats a second life. Nichols outfitted 40 science and art teachers with coats in Muskegon, Ottawa and Allegan counties.

"There are companies out there that are struggling with commodities and they just don't know where to get rid of them," said Renae. "Instead of searching around out there looking for ways to use or dispose of them, this is a place we can go."

Nichols is only the beginning for the EXchange. The EA is reaching out to small and large organizations throughout West Michigan in hopes of creating a large user base to sustain the EXchange.

The EXchange saves time, reduces waste, and reduces disposal costs, leading companies to their goals of sustainability. On top of it all, it leads to great business-to-business networking opportunities.

"The EXchange currently has many recycling resources and other tools are being planned to

increase B2B and community collaboration,” said Lisa Sabourin, president and CEO of the Employers Association of West Michigan. “It will be exciting to see it grow with community and individual organizations’ use.”

West Michigan is in good company, as other communities are starting similar exchange programs, like the California Materials Exchange. For more information: <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/calmax/>.

Founded in 1915, the Employers Association of West Michigan (EA) is a voluntary, private membership organization of enterprises located along the western shore of the state. The EA’s mission is to provide cost effective services and accurate information to management, in support of positive employee relations, a safe work environment and growth through continuous workforce development. The Employers Association works to achieve this goal by providing information employers need, training they require and more direct help as requested.

###

For more information on the EXchange, contact Lisa Sabourin at 231.759.0916 x 4003 or visit exchangewestmi.com.