

RAM assumes operation
of plastics recycling program

It's In The Bag, a successful plastic bag and film recycling program operated by the Minnesota Waste Wise Foundation, has been turned over to the Recycling Association of Minnesota.

The collection and recycling program provides consumers the opportunity to recycle plastic bags and film at participating locations. It also provides employment for adults with disabilities, who collect and sort the plastic material. It's In The Bag was created in 2003 by the Minnesota Waste Wise Foundation, a nonprofit affiliate of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce.

The program reflects the model that is at the foundation of Minnesota Waste Wise, said Jill Curran, executive director. "We excel at identifying a problem, then developing, testing and implementing a private-sector response. As the program matures and Minnesota Waste Wise is confident the problem is being addressed, we seek an organization that can run it permanently."

Maggie Mattacola, director of the Recycling Association of Minnesota, welcomed the new program.

"With RAM now taking the lead on the It's in the Bag program, we are able to further our mission of increasing recycling opportunities for Minnesotans and businesses alike," she said. "We see this as a wonderful complement to our other statewide recycling programs like Recycle Your Holidays™, a holiday light recycling program, and Message in a Bottle™, a beverage container recycling program which employ individuals with disabilities at local vocational centers."

Work crews from various vocational centers around the state collect and transport the plastic material to a processing facility where additional crews sort and bale the material. The material is then shipped to Trex Company, Inc. where it is recycled into composite lumber used in the construction of decks and railings.

"The Recycling Association of Minnesota is a perfect fit for the It's In The Bag program," Curran said. "It has a statewide presence and already runs several other recycling programs." The association took over management and operation of It's In The Bag, effective June 1.

Minnesota Waste Wise continues to operate the Health Care Blue Wrap program. This program, started in 2009, collects and recycles the material wrapped around sterilized surgical instruments. In 2010, the Minnesota Waste Wise Foundation, along with its program partners, received the Governor's Award for Excellence in Waste and Pollution Prevention for the Health Care Blue Wrap program.