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WASTE WISE

New Partnership Brings 'Away-From-Home' Recycling Programs to Waseca Area

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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February 3, 2010

New partnership brings 'away-from-home' recycling programs to Waseca area

St. Paul, MN - The Recycling Association of Minnesota (RAM) and Minnesota Waste Wise announced new recycling opportunities in the Waseca area today. Message in a Bottle™, an away-from-home bottle and can recycling program managed by RAM, and It's in the Bag™, a plastic bag recycling program managed by Waste Wise, will begin at the Holiday Station Store in Owatonna and the Kwik Trip in Waseca as well as many other area businesses on February 3, 2010.

"There is a great need to have easily-accessible recycling programs when Minnesotans are on the go. Message in a Bottle™ (MIB) and It's in the Bag™ (IITB) fulfill this need," stated Ellen Telander, Executive Director of RAM.

"It is a value-added service for customers of local businesses, it can save businesses money on waste disposal costs, and it provides jobs for Minnesotans," added Mark Blaiser, Executive Director of Waste Wise.

Both of these recycling programs have been highly successful at convenience and grocery stores in the

Twin Cities, St. Cloud, Mankato, Duluth, Hutchinson and Hinckley. Success is partly due to the eye-catching recycling containers used by the programs. MIB containers are shaped like soda bottles and IITB containers are clear, making it easy to see what's inside. To date, MIB has recycled more than 500,000 pounds of beverage containers and other plastics. IITB has recycled more than 5.5 million pounds of plastic bags and shrink film.

The programs will be partnering with the Minnesota Beverage Association, the USDA Rural Development, Steele County Environmental Services and Jobs Plus-a local vocational center employing adults with disabilities in the Waseca area. Jobs Plus employees will pick up recyclables at participating businesses such as the Holiday Station Store in Owatonna, and then sort and package them for transport. The program is projected to create 10 full-time positions at Jobs Plus.

The program expansion is possible due in part to a grant from U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development's Solid Waste Management grant program which will provide funding to launch the programs in 10 additional areas throughout Minnesota. "The beauty of this program is that it becomes self-sustaining in six to twelve months time," said Telander.

"This program gives rural communities the tools and resources necessary to better manage waste disposal costs and reduce impact on the environment," said Colleen Landkamer, State Director for Rural Development in Minnesota. "I am proud that Rural Development was able to provide the funding to help make this collaboration possible and look forward to following this project as it develops."

The Minnesota Beverage Association along with other business partners has also provided matching funds for the grant program. "It is important that this highly successful recycling program be offered statewide. Minnesotans are great recyclers when given the opportunity," stated Joan Archer, Executive Director of the Minnesota Beverage Association.

Minnesota Waste Wise is a nonprofit affiliate program of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and is committed to helping Minnesota businesses save money through waste reduction, resource conservation and energy efficiency. Waste Wise has enjoyed more than 15 years of experience consulting with businesses to achieve their environmental sustainability goals.

RAM is committed to promoting resource conservation through waste prevention, reuse, recycling, composting and purchasing practices using the most cost-effective and environmentally sound methods available in Minnesota. RAM also provides outreach activities to the public through the America Recycles Day campaign, its Web site, recycled product educational kits and other means. RAM has more than 200 members from the public, private and nonprofit sectors. RAM is the state organizer for America Recycles Day. RAM is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and an equal opportunity employer and provider.

USDA Rural Development finances housing, infrastructure and economic development projects in rural areas. Since 2001, the agency has invested over \$4.2 billion throughout rural Minnesota.

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About RAM: The Recycling Association of Minnesota RAM is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with more than 200 members from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. RAM is the Minnesota affiliate of the National Recycling Coalition. RAM is committed to promoting resource conservation through waste prevention, reuse, recycling, composting and purchasing practices using the most cost effective and environmentally sound methods available in Minnesota. RAM is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

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