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"The RECYCLE SWOP (swap) SHOP Concept"

The original 'Recycle Swop Shop' project is an empowerment initiative created for disadvantaged children. The aim of the program is three-fold:

- Help provide basic needs of children
- To clean up the community
- Teach environmental awareness, value & trading skills, responsibility & ownership of the process

The outworking of the concept is open ended and simply provides a framework. The basic concept is simply: to use recyclable material as a means of exchange for the basic needs to those persons the project targets. The ways in which it can serve the community is limited only to the creativity of those with vision for it.

In essence, the project places a value on recyclable material which effectively removes it from the dead end garbage model. Any material which can be reworked, preventing it from entering a landfill site is good news for every municipality. This is of benefit to every individual, home, community, country and environment of the world at large. The growing number of buyback centres, trying to earn a living through redirecting recyclable material to companies who rework the material for industry are faced with the high cost of collecting.

The Recycle Swop Shop fills this gap and empowers, educates and benefits children at the same time.

Giving the recyclable material value, (giving it points that can be redeemed for valuable items) turns it into a tool of exchange in the hands of children. The empowerment this brings to those who are marginalized due to their age and social constraints of their parents due to poverty, illness or the social ills of addiction, crime, irresponsibility and the list continues.

But the collection of recyclable material cannot and does not equal the value of items made available in the shop by the redeeming of points earned in the program. In no way can the operation be a profitable venture in the normal sense of exchange. It cannot operate without the donation and goodwill of those who are willing to volunteer their time, energy, goodwill, resources and provision. The project is sustained by giving. This is in direct contradiction of the world of economics.

This "giving" is not a handout, so the Recycle Swop Shop is NOT a charity in the common sense of the word. Neither is it in the broad sense, the concept and its operation is an educational tool that enable children to be empowered.

The points allocated to the material collected does not even come close to equating with the true value of the material collected. This is not the purpose of the project. That will just never work. The ONLY way it works is through the charitable component of its benefactors: *GIVING* through the recycling of their own belongings they no longer need or want, *GIVING* a financial contribution, *GIVING* their time, *GIVING* their energy, *GIVING* their creativity, *GIVING* their commitment and *GIVING* their belief in making the project work for others not themselves.

The true value of the items received for reward is estimated at 10 - 100 times more valuable than the material collected. The experiences learned through the process have been said to be "invaluable".

The potential of such projects is limitless: Enter the world of the Recycle Swop Shop.....

ALWAYS POSSIBLE WITH PURPOSE. PASSION, PEOPLE, PERSEVERANCE, AND PRAYER.

RECYCLE SWOP SHOP for Kids

The "Recycle Swop Shop for Kids" was initiated in 2003 in response to the bitter reality that many children in the Kwasa Kwasa area of Zwelihle Township near Hermanus were sitting apathetically in the streetside without benefit of the very basics: soap, toilet paper and food. The only thing that the children had access to was the garbage that surrounded them. "What can be done without funding, power or authority?"

That is when the idea was born. The idea took shape. Blessed to have a recycling buyback centre "Walker Bay Recycling" on our doorstep, the plan materialized. As the owner of an accommodation facility, and part of a community with many more, there was access to soap, towels and certainly a shop or two could be convinced to donate toilet paper. As the idea was shared, used clothing, apples and milk were donated. Children were encouraged to collect tins, plastics and glass bottles to trade for useful and fun things at the shop. (Paper and cardboard were not considered waste in the township, they were used as insulation material or fire starters.) Initially, it began with encouraging anyone 12 years or younger to come, for this was the age group seen on the streets. But any child or adolescent who would carry a bag of recyclables were welcomed and could "buy" something at the "Recycle Swop Shop".

At first, the shop supplied only items of personal hygiene and used clothing. The donation and the kindness of supporters increased the variety of stock that the "shop" could provide. School supplies were added to the supply and then later a Dutch charity, Stichting Projecten Zuid-Afrika, enabled us to supply school uniforms. The shop provided:

Personal Items: toilet paper, soap, face "lappies", toothbrushes, toothpaste,

School Supplies: everything a school age child might need

Clothes & Shoes: both used and new as donation enables

Toys & Books: through donation

But this was not all.

Children who attended received a snack. At first individuals provided milk, or bread, a local farmer donated apples in season. Weekly donation from a local bakery ensures us a continuous supply and on occasion donors provide soup on those cold days of winter. At year end, the children's collections for that week give them entrance to the annual Christmas party.

The program operates one afternoon a week from approximately 2:30 to 4 pm at Hou Moed Centre. It operates solely through volunteerism, donation of provision (financially & in kind) from local residents, interested visitors and international donors. Over 100 tons of recycling has been diverted from our landfill site through the collection of children and since its inception.

How Does it work?

Every Wednesday afternoon, children bring bags of tins, bottles, plastics and other recyclable material from the streets, to the Hou Moed Centre in Zwelihle (Hermanus). The children receive a ticket with a point value relating to the volume or weight of the sorted material they bring. Children then go to the "shop". At this point, they queue to wait for their turn in the shop. There they can redeem their points for a variety of items: school supplies, toiletries, used or new clothing and shoes, toys or books (whatever may be donated). The redeeming of points works as follows: one point will purchase a balloon, two points a pencil, three points a roll of toilet paper, five points a face cloth and so on. Used clothing is also made available in the same way. The more valuable the items, the higher the price, just like a real store. But there is always something for everyone and no one leaves emptyhanded. The children have the option to 'save up' or bank points to buy more expensive items, if they wish. "Earn a School Uniform" pilot project was initiated in 2005.. While the Recycle Swop Shop is not directly involved in getting children registered for school, the project, through monitoring what items are chosen identifies children not attending (identification for intervention). Making school supplies available helps to keep kids in school.

Additional projects such as hikes, outings to the recycling plant, boat trips, swimming excursions, movies, flower shows, and trips up the mountain have all provided excitement and reward for effort. The special events seek to expose children to places and events to educate & sensitize them further to their issues facing their community and environment. At one stage The Young Entrepreneurial Award was used to recognize achievement. Special draws were done to encourage participation and attendance.

As mentioned, the Recycle Swop Shop operates solely through volunteerism. A loyal crew of adult monitors oversee the project's operation each week at the collection yard and in the shop itself. These monitors mentor our teen volunteers who serve the children and bridge the language barrier to explain and encourage the children in the routines, responsibilities and rules of the shop.

Local clubs & businesses have become "willing partners" in supporting and spreading the word of the project to others. Some of our most loyal are: Fruit & Veg City (bakery items every week), Hermanus Rotary Anns (knitted items and financial contribution), Overstrand Municipality (plastic bags for collections & financial) Maxitec (website www.swop-shop.za.net), Walker Bay Recycling (collects material each week and provides a payback scheme), Nampac (toilet tissue) and Hou Moed Centre (premises).

In deciding the form and function of your RSS project, in everything ask yourself: "What are we teaching the children by doing this or implementing this?" In the longrun this saves a great deal of time, energy and disappointment.

I want to start a Recycle Swop Shop in my own community, what should I do?

Consider these things:

WHY:

This is the most important question we need to answer to ensure the success of the project. This model was created as a means to give a "hand up not a handout". Its strength is in the dedication of the people who manage, organize, volunteer, donate their time, energy and resources. What we get out is what we put in. Each individual "swop shop project" will be as unique as the community it serves.

"Hands turned up to receive handouts, create beggars. Hands turned down to work, creates responsible citizens."

WHO:

Identify key people needed to help ensure the success of the project:

1. recycling people (private or municipal who will remove your collectables from the shop area)
2. the children (age, location, needs etc)
3. assistance (people to provide hands on as well as financial or donated material support)

WHAT:

Identify the needs of the population targeted. This will help determine where to begin and what rewards to offer. Some communities are most desperate and it can begin by offering a cup or soup or toiletries for trade. Offering the most practical is both desirable & appreciated. (Consider Maslow's hierarchy of needs.)

WHERE:

The location selected must be practical. Consider these things:

1. Is it close enough for the children to carry their recycling to the collection point? Or can the RSS be mobile and go to them?
2. Storage for the items for "swop" (swap)? (Stationary or mobile, dependant on need.)
3. Space for sorting, collection and weighing as well as an area for the "purchases" to occur.
4. Ideally (but not necessary), an undercover space, shielded from the weather where the "shop" can operate.

WHEN:

This is fully dependant on the community the "swop shop" serves. After school midweek gives the children time on weekends and after school other days to do the collection. Encourage stockpiling of recycling throughout the week to be ready for swop shop day.

HOW:

In the pages to follow, are some suggestions. Dedicated and inspired individuals will find their unique way with the resources they have.

COLLECTION, SORTING & ISSUE OF TICKETS

1. **PREPARATION** - Children form a line with their bags of collectables that they have collected over the weekend or during the week after school.
2. **POINT VALUE** - Two separate systems have been used over the course of the RSS operation.

The emphasis of the program is to give reward for effort.

By WEIGHT - a hanging scale is needed and more volunteers are needed. It takes more time but has benefits - provides much needed practise & teaching of math skills for student volunteers and enables the project to balance weights with the buyback centre at the end of the year. The formula used is: weight of glass x .5 = value; weight of tin x 3 = ticket value and weight of plastic x 5 = ticket value

By

VOLUME - without a scale naturally it is not possible to give an accurate measurement but the following system worked well for 5 years. The benefits are that one person can do the operation of collections without assistance and there is minimal handling of material. One **grocery bag** full of plastics equals 1 point, tins = 2 points or glass bottles = 3 points **AND** one **garbage bag** full of plastics equals 5 points, tins 7 points and glass bottles - 10 points.

As complicated as it sounds, both systems result in a very similar outcome for values.

Encourage children to sort their bags before coming. Unsorted material receives a low value, the above receives the values calculated above. This encourages children to bring their materials sorted. They soon recognize the benefit to gain higher point value.

3. **TICKETS** - Using coloured paper and coloured koki pens the recording person can issue a ticket based on the above volume. Children then sort the unsorted material in to the large "wool" bags provided. (Material already sorted into large recycling or garbage bags can be set aside for collection by the recycling agent).

4. **CLEANING UP THE AREA** - If the project runs with few volunteers it may be necessary to finish collections and ticket issue before the shop opens where the tickets can be redeemed. In the early days of the shop, before the volunteer program, the children did all sorting and made sure the area of collection was clear before the shop opened.

5. EDUCATIONAL - While children are waiting for the shop to open is an opportunity to speak to the group about news or specific information you wish to convey, or disciplinary procedures. For example: why we recycle, what happens to the collectables, environmental issues and plans for outings.

NOTE: We have found that using different colours of paper for tickets each week and using a different colour of marker will prevent any forgery of tickets. (Beware of older children placing a one in front of a value or a 0 after a value!)

IN THE "SWOP" SHOP

1. Depending on the focus of the specific shop and the human resources, it must be determined if the shop opens after collections are complete or the two operations happen concurrently. If it opens on a small scale with one or two people operating it, it may be wise that it not open until all sorting and cleaning up of the collection area is complete. In this way, the children are encouraged to be part of and take responsibility for the process.
2. For monitoring purposes and to ensure children understand the process, it is important to limit 3 to 4 children into the shopping area at one time. Young children and those with inexperience or lack of understanding value will need assistance spending their points. This is where it is essential to have a volunteer who can speak the child's language.
3. If one operates a mobile or an area in which the project does not have sole access, it is helpful to place items of the same value in one box or bin labelled with that value. In a specific room or shop premises items can be individually ticketed on a shelf. Each 'swop shop' project must determine which system is best for them.
4. Keep tickets that have been redeemed to record attendance numbers. Values on the ticket may also be used to calculate the volunteer's accuracy of assessing point value in the collection yard. Tickets can also be kept which enter children in a draw to go on outings, receive a prize or become part of a big brother or big sister mentoring project. There are no limits in what activities might be added.
5. As children leave, a piece of fruit, a cup of milk or a sandwich may be provided. It has been found that some children do not want or need it and others come through the system 2 or 3 times in one day to receive the sustenance. Naturally, this depends on your resources and assistance available. Personally, out of principle,, I do not 'sell' candy in the 'swop shop' nor do I provide it as a reward or incentive. It goes against my personal conviction and prefer to "give" sweets from time to time but do not use it as a reward.

NOTE: To allow parents in the shop with children may cause conflict, confusion or competition. A policy has been adopted: "If the child collects, the child chooses."

Some parents have expressed a wish to attend the RSS. Since the program provides **point value as a reward for effort** the allocation of points for children and adults should be different to be fair. It would require adjustment. The **effort** of an adult to carry a bag of tins is much less than for a child to do the same.

ASSIDE: Unemployed mothers with babies expressing a wish to attend the 'swop shop' have been served at Hermanus, but are closely monitored. To avoid complications, each mother (with babe on their back) may swop for baby clothes or other infant items which may have been donated. Mothers do not enter the shop with the children but rather a volunteer takes the bin of clothing to the mothers, so "purchases" can be made.

Each 'swop shop' must make their own policy.

RECYCLE SWOP SHOP for KIDS

(depending on availability and your Swop Shop's financial picture, adjust your prices accordingly)

PERSONAL ITEMS

- Soap - (small 1)(large 5)
- Shampoo/Lotion - 2
- Lappie - 6
- Toilet Paper - 5
- Toothbrush - 4
- Toothpaste - 7
- Small Towel Used - 5
- Small Towel New - 10
- Large or New Bath Towel - 15

CLOTHING

- Swimwear - 5
- Tanktops OR Shorts - 3
- T-shirts - 5
- Tights OR Trousers - 6
- Sandals - 5
- Shoes - 8-10
- Boots - 15
- Dresses - 8
- Warm tops OR Jersey - 8-10
- Jackets - 10
- Underpants - 3-5

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Used Supplies - Lucky pick 1 each (crayons 5 for 1)

Balloon - 1

Pencil - 2

Sharpener - 3

Pen - 4

Eraser - (small 2) (large 4)

Rulers - 5

Scissors - 6

Glue - (small 5) (large 10)

Notebooks - (small 4) (large 7)

Wax Crayons (6) - 6 per set

Wax Crayons (12) - 8 per set

Coloured Pencils (6) - 8 per set

Coloured Pencils (12) - 15 per set

Cello Tape - (small 7) (large 10)

Flip Files - 10

TOYS

Various - 1 to 5 points

AWARDS, INCENTIVES & SPECIAL EVENTS

Incentives take a variety of forms and encourage children to recycle. This is limited only to the creativity and passion of those persons involved. Some of the most simple ideas and activities may be the most effective. When making a plan it is important to ask yourselves, "What are we teaching the children by doing this?"

A simple snack plan each week encourages many children to return and fulfills a need for many children. It is usually easy to source a regular donation within your community through grocery stores, restaurants or farmers.

A weekly or monthly draw also encourage regular attendance - a special toy, donated bicycle, large stuffed toy or scooter and exciting prizes, be creative. Meals in a restaurant are hugely popular.

Outings in the community or surrounds is an educational opportunity to expose children to those things they might never have the chance otherwise. Some suggestions: nature reserve, festivals in the area, swimming, the movies, a museum or other local points of interest, police station, on a boat trip, picnic, hiking etc.

A Young Entrepreneur Award as a yearly recognition of effort and amount of recyclable material collected has been popular. It requires the record keeping of not just that attendance but also of the amount children collect. It is workable when you have a consistent group of children collecting but the administration is a challenge if there are large numbers of children who are erratic in their attendance patterns. It is quite easy to get sponsorship from a club or charity for this and works well combined with an outing for a meal in a restaurant with about 10 to 15 runners up to the award. Very few township children eat out in this way and it is a very popular activity. It is a great way to teach table etiquette.

Special events like: year end "thank you" gathering, monthly birthday party or similar might be held.

Eligibility of a child or children to take part, enter or win can be done different ways. You might like to reward effort, outcome or just be inclusive of all participants. To expose children to new and different experiences is both educational and inspiring to everyone involved.

OUTINGS for CHILDREN

This is an aspect of the program was developed as an incentive but also intended as an educational opportunity to introduce disadvantaged children to places & things they might never have the chance to experience otherwise.

PLACES: Educational aspects of the outings are always a consideration - dairy, nature reserve, recycling centre etc.

FREQUENCY: This is entirely dependant on resources, not only financial but also depends on available persons for supervision and to provide transport.

NUMBERS: A group of 15 children or fewer aged 6 to 12 is suggested.

SUPERVISION: There should be no less than two adults supervising an outing group.

LEGAL ASPECTS: Each child going on the outing must have a parent permission slip signed by their parent or guardian. (see addendum) Drivers of vehicles 'should' hold a PDP driver's licence.

CHOOSING CHILDREN: This is the most difficult because EVERYONE wants to go! Experience suggests letting pre-school children anticipate trips when they are older. Eligibility can be determined in several ways. Collections may be recorded and the most diligent collectors rewarded. The easiest is to let a child "enter" each time he or she attends the 'swop shop' by putting their "ticket" (with their name) in a drawbox. The 15 children meeting the age restriction drawn may go on the outing.

Suggestion:

- When walking, a knotted rope that children hang onto is a very useful tool!
- Be sure to take on every outing: a roll or toilet paper, a wet lappie & towel.

Point Value VS Real Value

Glass Value = 8c / kg = 16c / small bag = 3 pts = lg bag / 8 pts

Tin Value = 12c / kg = 6c / small bag = 2 pt = lg bag / 5 pts

Plastic = 40c / kg = 20c / small bag = 1 pt = lg bag / 3 pts

Average value of collectables = 15c per small bag = 2 point

Average value of collectables = 75c per large bag = 5 points

Examples of what you can buy:

Balloon = 1 point (15c RSS price) (50c real price)

Pencil = 2 points (30c RSS price) (R3 real price)

Coloured Pencils = 15 points (R2.25 RSS price) (R15-20 real price)

Toilet paper = 5 points (75c RSS price {60c}) (R2.50 real price)

Toothpaste = 7 points (R1.05 RSS price) (R5.00 real price)

Soap = 5 points (75c RSS price) (R4.00 real price)

Toothbrush = 6 points (90c RSS price) (R5.00 real price)

New Underpants = 5 points (75c RSS price) (R6.00 real price)

Used clothing = 10 points (R1.50 RSS price) (R10-15 real value or much much more)

School uniforms made available at a trade up value of R1 per point, an incredible value that cannot be matched anywhere!

School Socks = PEP cost R6.00 (90c RSS price)

Shirt = PEP cost R35.00 (R5.25 RSS price)

Trousers = PEP cost R60 (R9.00 RSS price)

Shoes = PEP cost R100 (R15.00 RSS price)

NOTICE TO CHILDREN IN ZWELIHLE

WHO? All children in Zwelihle aged 2-12

WHAT? A Recycle Swop Shop is OPEN

WHEN? Every Wednesday afternoon from 2:30 - 4:00 pm

WHERE? At Hou Moed Centre

WHY?

1. To clean up Zwelihle
2. To help children earn what they need & to have fun
3. To help prevent disease and sickness
4. To learn about many things

HOW?

1. When you pick up tins, bottles, plastic and paper, you are cleaning up Zwelihle.
2. You can trade bags of recyclables for things like: soap, lappies, toilet paper, pens, pencils, school supplies, books, rain ponchos, clothes, shoes, and much more...
3. When we clean up our environment and use toilet paper & wash with soap, we can prevent sickness & disease.
4. When we go on outings we can learn things.

What are outings?

- Every month children who collect more than 10 bags of recyclables may be invited to go on outings to different places in Hermanus. If you do this, you will get a note. Your parent must sign it so you can have permission to go. In February 2004, the child who collects the most for the year, gets a special prize!

SEE YOU THERE !

KEEPING RECORDS

Be sure to keep accurate records. Accountability is the key to people being eager and willing to support your project. Statistics are the best way to communicate to people how your project is progressing.

Included are some very simple templates which may assist. It is a good thought to keep record of the items going out to the children through the 'swop shop' , however the sheer volumes or items were so high, it became too demanding. It is most important to keep an accurate financial records and is required if the project seeks NPO status. To start, keep a simple cashbook.

Cashbook

Record of Collections

Record of Attendance (numbers of children)

Record of Donors

SUPPORT FOR YOUR SWOP SHOP

The concept is very much meant to be a community project, not just in its locale but to the community at large; the privileged and the disadvantaged. It has the potential to be a networking & bridging tool. Everyone wins.

It must be stated that the original project began with no startup capital, only the desire to help and the goodwill and faith of those who gave.

There are 3 basic areas of support needed:

1. Human resources (by far the most important) Building good relationships ensures that every other need will be taken care of. The concept is all about people. It is of great importance that unity of purpose is established so energy is effectively utilized. This translates into the greatest rewards and huge encouragement to everyone involved. The network to keep the project operational is largely unseen for it is those who donate; the bag of clothes, the box of pencils or the collection of knit beanies. Networking between organizations and clubs, schools and churches is essential.

2. Supplies - used clothing, towels, soap, school supplies, books, toys, toiletries - anything your patrons at the shop can use.

3. Financial - there are always needs that may not be readily available by donation. For these, it is helpful to have a petty cash fund.

Support may be local AND international. The project appeals to the international traveller who often wants to become part of a grassroots project that they can identify with AND support after they have returned home.

Creative projects between schools & churches here and abroad benefit all.

The internet is a useful tool to spread the word through cooperation from local business who might add a paragraph about their support of the Recycle Swop Shop in addition to their communication about products or services they sell.

TEN STEPS TO OPEN A SWOP SHOP

1. **Visit a Recycle Swop Shop** near you and learn all you can about how they operate. Ask questions and develop a vision of how you can apply the idea in your own community.
2. **Locate a local recycling agent in your community** where the material collected can be directed for reconstitution or reworking. This may be the most challenging part in our country at the moment. Work with the local municipality in this for each kilogram of waste which is not directed to landfill saves them time and money.
3. **Identify a location** where the 'swop shop' will happen each week. This can be a street corner if you plan a mobile operation or a community space you have organized storage for trading stock (rewards for effort).
4. **Set a day and time** each week that is convenient for the children. Keep in mind the school schedule of sports and other after school activities. Liaise with the local school to identify the best afternoon.
5. **Collect the items needed:** supplies for swop (see price list), sorting bags for recycling (4 or more large wool bags or large bags made out of shade cloth), milk crates or boxes to store & display items for the "shop", coloured marker and paper squares for tickets.
6. **Advertise** the concept with a few children in the neighbourhood to start. Word of mouth is an effective way for children which understand the concept will teach others. To start a large scale may be overwhelming and requires more people and resources. Let excited children tell others, let it grow.
7. **Keep record** of the numbers of children attending, amounts of recyclables collected and so on. This will be useful when sharing with others your effectiveness to gain support.
8. **Consider outings** for the children as incentives to collect more and as an educational tool to inform and sensitize children to community and environmental issues.
9. **Inform the local community** of your activities through outings where they can see your action with children, send articles to the newspaper, invite people & organizations to visit.

10. **Approach** clubs, charities, individuals and businesses to help you, as your needs increase. Show statistics to prove your success.

11. **Enjoy.**