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Representing The Wiping Materials, Recycled Clothing, New Textile By Products and Fiber Industries



President's Column

Bill Schapiro, SMART President

The Council on Textile Recycling

The April 15th New York Times Magazine had an essay by Thomas Friedman entitled "The Greening of Geopolitics" in which it was stated that 'Going Green' was viewed by many big companies such as Wal-Mart as "A whole new way to cut costs and drive profits." In other words, environmentalism has gone mainstream!

SMART has lately received inquiries from more than one large company about recycling and sustainability. In fact, Wal-Mart asked Executive Director, Peter Mayberry to serve as a "stakeholder" (periodic advisor) on their environmental initiative.

All of this renewed interest in environmentalism has led to more than one member of SMART to inquire into the possibility of reinvigorating our "Council for Textile Recycling", a 501(c) 3 foundation. The Council was formed in the early 90's with the purpose of educating the public about the value of recycling of textiles. A speaker's bureau and educational materials including an excellent video were but a part of this successful endeavor.

Because it is an educational foundation, the Council was able to function as a coalition including the non-profit, the for-profit and government sectors. Our speakers addressed conferences of mayors, congressional committees, and municipalities and were active in the National Recycling Coalition. The foundation was actually able to show a profit through donations and sales of educational materials.

The increase of supplies and weakened prices for donated clothing along with other factors caused the Council to stagnate in the mid 90's, but it seems the time has come to make use of this excellent vehicle, especially in light of recent shortages of supply of mixed institutional clothing.

Already some members have volunteered to chair the invigorated Council. The possibilities of educating the government and the public about what we do seem endless in light of the new worldwide emphasis on the environment. And a coalition foundation that, by its nature exists to educate, can lead to better understanding of our issues, from the customs problem to the EPA issue to helping our processors qualify as manufacturers under the new tax incentives being offered to U.S. Exporters.

The Council of Textile Recycling is but one of the many interesting topics on the schedule for the June 13th Board meeting in Toronto.

This really is an exciting time to be a member of SMART.
