

Local Bottling Company Innovates

by Sarah E. Wardell. Courtesy graphic.

First, it was Faygo. Then it was Jones' soda. Now, local bottling behemoths Canada Dry have unveiled their newest super-innovative product—re:newal Premium Spring Water—a 100 percent renewable, recyclable, plant-based bottle.

That's right, plastic water bottles made from corn. What's even better? The bottle is completely made within, and uses products from, the United States.

Canada Dry President Randy Shanker says, "The re:newal bottle is very cool technology, an exciting innovation. The bottle could literally go back into the ground, it's 100 percent compostable...and we've had great response so far."

The corn-based bottles are manufactured using the same technology as a bag of SunChips, and is actually made from the same compostable materials. The bottle has the same feel and weight as traditional water bottles, and everything down to the label and cap will decompose in as little as 45 days; most water bottles are made with oil and take many years to break down.

"Sustainability is extremely important to this company," Shanker adds. "We're in an industry that isn't sustainability-friendly [although Michigan is a state that recycles]; re:new is 100 percent compostable and a huge step away from products that are made from only 10 to 20 percent recycled materials—it's radically different."

Since there is less energy produced in the manufacturing of the re:newal bottles, there are also 20 to 30 percent fewer carbon emissions, which is good for us all. In the next three to four months, Shanker hopes to have the entire state covered, and locally, the re:newal water is available for purchase at Goodrich's ShopRite, Big 10 Oades and local convenience and party stores. ■



lator. A larger and increasingly mobile population with greater discretionary income and the increase in fast-food restaurants proved to be a fertile market for companies like Dart.

"Starting in the late 1980s, concern about solid waste management issues has grown throughout the world. Part of that was an effort to look closely at what was in the waste stream, what's it made out of and what can be done with those materials. Plastics began to be a significant focus of people's attention. We started doing a few different things beginning back then. One was to educate our employees, our customers and the general public about the facts regarding the environmental profile, the life cycle inventory of our products and competing products. There you're looking at environmental issues connected with the sourcing of the raw materials, the processing of those materials, the energy input as well as the output of all of that, and you're also looking at the afterlife of those products. Foam is a thermal plastic, which means that it can easily be reprocessed or recycled. What you end up with is solid pellets which can then be reprocessed for things like picture frames, clipboards or the like. We sell these pellets to other manufacturers for reuse."

Dart has foam collection centers for recycling, connected with the facilities they operate. At these centers, post-consumer food service products go through a special wash and dry technology developed by Dart. The center also accepts foam packaging materials, such as foam protecting new appliances and computers, as well as items like egg cartons and produce trays.

Lammers says, "One of the challenges with foam is to get more and more places accepting it, more access points for both businesses and residences. In transporting this material to a central recycling plant, it helps to densify it, and we have designed and manufactured a machine to do this. We also have a program called Dart CARE (Cups Are REcyclable) which helps large users of foam food service products separate the foam from other products, consolidate the collected material and arrange to have it recycled.

"Besides the wash and dry technology, the densifier and CARE, we have other programs that help these efforts. One is a Recyla-Pak for smaller users who are able to send used materials back to us in the original shipping container. In Michigan, we have established a Michigan county drop-off program, 34 sites in 22 counties. We pick up from those sites and bring materials here for recycling. One of the new ideas we are working on is to have foam included in residential pickup programs,

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