

# Leicester's recycling efforts assist those in need

## LEICESTER NOTEBOOK

By Betty Lilyestrom CORRESPONDENT

Seems as if there's practically nothing that a dyed-in-the-wool recycler can't find a use for.

A couple of weeks ago Ruth Kaminski, Leicester's recycling guru, was in the Leicester Notebook making a pitch for your old sofas, overstuffed chairs and box springs — she had found a company that would cart them away at a minimal cost and completely recycle them.

This week she wants your old clothes.

Just about everybody has wearable old clothes that they've outgrown or have grown tired of wearing. What do you do with them?

Some folks just toss them in the trash. Some folks who realize that there are other folks out there who have barely enough money to buy groceries, never mind buying clothes, donate them to Goodwill or the Salvation Army. Some even bring them to Leicester's Recycling Center — yes, they take clothes too.

But those donations are way down, Ruth said.

What worries her are that the clothing collection boxes that have popped up around area towns, particularly the ones that don't specify where the clothes they collect are going and what's going to be done with them.

"If it's going to needy people, hopefully in our area, then I'm all right with it," she said. "But before they donate people should make it a point to find out where their donated clothing is going and whether it's actually going to be worn. If you put a bag of clothes in some of these boxes, I've found they are automatically shipped to other countries and ground up. Then they are made into lower grade cloth and used to make other items.

"As a result, our local charities like the Salvation Army and Goodwill are left with less in their stores which serve a very important purpose for people victimized by fire, homelessness, addiction and just plain times of trouble."

Ruth said that the clothing collected at the Recycling Center goes to local charities, shelters and businesses.

"Young men's clothing goes to Hope House and similar shelters," she said. "Old sheets, blankets and towels are also needed for shelters. We particularly need good clean rags for local automotive businesses and animal shelters. Old T-shirts work well as rags — automotive businesses cut them up and use and reuse them again and again. We also take belts and shoes — even one shoe. They are cut apart and recycled. It is also OK to donate one sock, too. If anyone finds the place that all those socks go that disappear from the dryer never to be seen again let us know — we'll pick them up."

Ruth warns donors of clothing and other fabric items to make sure they are kept dry. Wet clothes or rags can cause mold and may have to be destroyed.