

**CITIZENS
CAMPAIGN FOR
THE
ENVIRONMENT**

JUNE, 2011

B.Y.O.B.

Bring Your Own Bag

Reusable Bag Policies at Westchester County Grocery Stores

CITIZENS CAMPAIGN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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Acknowledgements

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Citizens Campaign for the Environment is a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization, supported by over 80,000 members in New York and Connecticut.

CCE works to empower communities and advocate solutions that protect public health and our natural environment.

For more information on CCEs work on reducing plastic bag pollution in our environment, please visit our website at:

<http://www.citizenscampaign.org/campaigns/plastic-bags.asp>



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The Problem with Plastic

Disposable grocery bags, which have become a habit for consumers across the world, are environmentally harmful and completely unnecessary. Yet, they are widely and abundantly used across America. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, each American uses an average of 300-700 disposable shopping bags each year resulting in 100 billion annually. Disposable bags often become unsightly litter that clings to trees and fences, covers our open spaces, and pollutes our parks, highways, and beaches. They also clog storm drains creating localized flooding.

Each American uses an average of 300-700 disposable shopping bags each year resulting in 100 billion annually.



Plastic products have created a plastic wasteland in our oceans. Great ocean currents combined with large amounts of floating plastic waste have resulted in several swirling plastic waste vortexes that, in the Pacific Ocean, span thousands of square miles. Marine animals often mistake plastic bags for food such as jellyfish. Once eaten, the bags cannot be processed and block the digestive system, causing starvation.

Westchester County is surrounded by two major estuaries: the Long Island Sound and the Hudson River. The good news is that in 2009, dolphins returned to the Long Island Sound, and the DEC is reporting growing populations of heron, egrets, and bald eagles in the Hudson Valley.

Good stewardship of waterways and our lands starts with good choices by the public. That is why CCE wants to increase consumer use of reusable bags and has launched an educational effort called “BYOB – Bring your Own Bag.”



This report is part of a larger educational campaign that seeks to educate consumers and businesses on how to reduce plastic pollution. CCFE has worked with dozens of individual store owners to promote reusable bags & hundreds of consumers have pledged to “BYOB”. We

continue to distribute educational material and provide community and school presentations on the benefits to making the switch.

The plastic bag has an average lifespan of 12 minutes.

This report provides a comprehensive evaluation on the various policies and practices implemented by the major Westchester grocery stores to promote increased use of reusable grocery bags. The report is also designed to be used as a tool for stores to learn from each other. Reusable bag signage, availability of reusable bags, and consumer rebates encourage us to change old, careless habits, and replace them with new, sustainable ones. Bringing your own bag is healthier for our environment, reduces litter, saves us money, and leads to a more sustainable life style. Together, we can make a difference.

Report Card

	A & P Food Store	Deciccio's	Mrs. Green's	Pathmark
	C	B	B	C
1. Do you sell reusable bags?	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>
2. What is the cost of one bag in your store?	<i>.99c</i>	<i>.99c</i>	<i>.99c</i>	<i>.99c</i>
3. Do you promote reusable bags?	<i>Yes</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>
4. Do you have signage in front of your store or on your parking grounds reminding consumers to bring reusable bags?	<i>No</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
5. Do you have a policy of crediting consumers for each reusable bag they use?	<i>Yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>not right now</i>	<i>yes</i>
6. How much do you credit consumers?	<i>.2c</i>	<i>.3c</i>	<i>XX</i>	<i>.2c</i>
7. Does your store train cashiers to ask consumers if they brought their own bag?	<i>Yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
8. Would you support public education programs that encourage consumers to increase usage of reusable bags over disposable bags?	<i>unsure</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>
<i>BONUS: During site visits, did shopping experience match up with in store policies?</i>	<i>6/7</i>	<i>6/7</i>	<i>6/7</i>	<i>7/7</i>
Total Points:	28/40	32/40	32/40	29/40
Total Grade:	70%	80%	80%	72%

ShopRite	Stew Leonards	Stop & Shop	Trader Joe's	Walmart	Whole Foods
B+	C	A+	B	D	A+
<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>
<i>.99c-1.29</i>	<i>1.39-3.99</i>	<i>.99-1.99</i>	<i>.99-6.99</i>	<i>.50</i>	<i>.79-6.99</i>
<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>
<i>no</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>yes</i>
<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>yes</i>
<i>.2-.5c</i>	<i>XX</i>	<i>.5c</i>	<i>raffle</i>	<i>XX</i>	<i>.10c</i>
<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>
<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i> <i>with restrictions</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>unsure</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>
<i>6/7</i>	<i>6/7</i>	<i>5/7</i>	<i>5/7</i>	<i>4/7</i>	<i>7/7</i>
<i>35/40</i>	<i>30/40</i>	<i>39/40</i>	<i>32/40</i>	<i>27/40</i>	<i>45/40</i>
87%	75%	97%	80%	67%	100+%

Grading Methodology

1) Do you sell reusable bags?	Yes No	5 Points 0 Points
2) What is the cost of one bag in your store?	Less than 99 cents 99 cents More than 99 cents	5 points 3 points 1 point
3) Does the store promote reusable bags?	Yes No	5 points 0 points
4) Do you have signage in front of your store or on your parking grounds reminding consumers to bring reusable bags?	Yes No	5 points 0 points
5) Do you have a policy of crediting consumers for each reusable bag they use?	Yes No	5 points 0 points
6) How much do you credit consumers?	Less than 5 cents 5 cents More than 5 cents	1 point 3 points 5 points
7) Does your store train cashiers to ask consumers if they brought their own bag?	Yes No	5 point 0 points
8) Would you support public education programs that encourage consumers to increase usage of reusable bags over disposable bags?	Yes No	5 points 0 points
Bonus: During site visits, did shopping experience match up with in store policies?	7/7 6/7 5/7 4/7 3/7	5 points 4 points 3 points 2 points 1 point

96-100	A+
90-95	A
86-89	B+
80-85	B
76-79	C+
70-75	C
60-69	D
<59	F

** If there were any discrepancies between local and corporate stores and site visits, we always gave stores benefit of the doubt and/or went with the corporate answer.

** Information on site visits is available per request.



Reducing disposable bags is good for the environment, good for our wallets, and good for grocery stores. There are several municipalities and companies that have taken steps to ban or place a surcharge on plastic bags. In each case, plastic bag use was reduced dramatically-almost overnight.

Case Studies: Municipalities that made the switch

Ireland

In 2002 Ireland implemented a surcharge on plastic bags that equates to approximately 30 cents. In just 6 years, plastic bag consumption has been cut dramatically. The country has seen a 90% decrease in the use of plastic bags since the surcharge and over 1 billion fewer bags are used annually.

Westport, CT

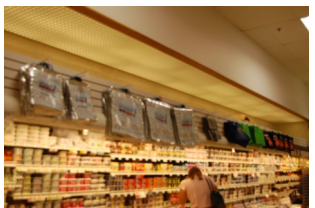
In September of 2008, Westport became the only town in CT and on first on the East Coast to have a plastic bag ban. After the ban, there was a 70% increase in folks bringing reusable bags to the stores. It is estimated that the town of Westport now uses 600,000 fewer plastic bags per year.

Washington, DC

Washington, DC implemented a 5 cent charge on plastic bags in January 2010. Within weeks of implementation some stores reported reductions of 6,000 bags a week and others reduced bag supply from 12,000 cases per week to 6 cases. Before the change, D.C. customers used 22.5 million bags each month; after the month it was 3 million, a reduction of 86%.

Southampton Village, NY

In April 2011, the Southampton Village became the first New York State municipality to implement a ban on plastic bags. The ban requires stores to provide either reusable or recyclable paper bags to consumers.



Conclusion

CCE is calling on all members of the public to make the switch to reusable bags. Simple individual actions will collectively make a huge difference. We also need grocery store's policies to encourage this change. Our report reviews 10 major grocery stores throughout Westchester County and their policies toward promoting reusable bags. Stores can and should play a meaningful role in this important effort. Grocery stores that offered rebates, displayed signage, and trained store workers to inquire if shoppers brought their own bags scored higher on the report. These are policies that, when implemented, help change consumer culture.

Highlights

Whole Food Market offered the largest monetary incentive for bringing your own bag – a 10 cent rebate per bag. They were also the only store where the cashier asked if we needed a bag. During the research for this report, **Mrs. Greens** added BYOB signage to their store and is currently in the process of developing a policy to give a monetary incentive for bringing your own bag. **Mrs. Greens** also removed paper bags from visibility at the checkout counter and does not offer plastic bags. **Stop and Shop** and **Stew Leonards** were the only stores with extensive signage outside the stores and in the parking lots that remind customers to grab their reusable shopping bags from the car. **ShopRite** has a creative incentive for bringing your own bag – offering a 5 cent rebate for a reusable bag and a 2 cent rebate for reusing a plastic bag. Although **Pathmark** did not have signage outside their store, they do post signs inside the store reminding customers to bring their own bag. *These are commendable policies and CCE believes that by spotlighting them, other stores can easily adopt them.*

Stores that received lower grades failed to promote reusable bags and to provide effective incentives for shoppers to BYOB. For instance, when we visited **Walmart** they were completely sold out of reusable bags. While **Deciccio's** has a 3 cent rebate per bag, many of the cashiers were unaware of this policy and did not offer any rebates during store visits. Also, while **Stop and Shop** has extensive outdoor signage, we were disappointed to see that many of the parking lot signs were covered up by a new promotion to save money on gasoline at Shell stations.

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