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OCALA BUSINESS JOURNAL GREEN SCENE: AL AND ERIN ROSAS

Paper or drastic?

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By one estimate, it costs cities 17 cents to dispose of each plastic bag that you can do without.

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Recycling rates for plastic bags are extremely low. Only 1 to 3 percent of plastic bags end up getting recycled.

We're all tired of gas prices and soaring energy costs but there is more driving oil prices than just your car. Ponder this before you pack the bags.

The United States alone uses about 12 million barrels of oil to produce 100 billion bags annually. Let's put that into perspective. That is the TOTAL annual average consumption of oil for around a half a million U.S. citizens. Get rid of the bags and add that to your oil savings from the ecocleaners we told you about and imagine just how much less oil we would have to be dependent on as a nation.

How many is your business handing out each year? Start keeping track or better yet, do something drastic and get rid of the plastic completely. Just don't do it.

Offer incentives as we do at Rosas Farms. If our customers bring back their bag, we offer a 10 percent discount. Drastic, yes, but so much better than plastic.

But we recycle, you say? Well, hold it. It costs about \$4,000 to process and recycle one ton of plastic bags. That ton sells for \$30 bucks, according to Jared Blumenfeld, director of San Francisco's Department of the Environment as reported by Christian Science Monitor. If there's no money in it, well, recycling doesn't work. Plastic bags are really ugly and really dangerous for a number of reasons. In Africa the problem has gotten so bad that people are collecting them and weaving them into

bags and hats . We call them the Florida State Flower. We've seen our free-range

chickens killed from eating them on our farm, found them wrapped around our calves' heads from people carelessly throwing them out the window and onto our pristine

organic farmland. We pay employees to pick them up every week. Just how many man-hours are you spending picking them up at your business?

Still not convinced? Reusablebags.com has a tracker that shows the staggering number of plastic bags used around the world. Just click on it. If you're human, you'll be shocked. It's drastic and necessary to see it and then to tell everyone you know to see just what we're doing to the planet. Then make a smart business decision.

Facing these drastic facts will help your company make the change easily and help you to inform your customers that we have to get rid of "paper or plastic" once and for all. That first plastic bag you handed out at when your business opened is likely STILL in the landfill emitting toxins that are continuously destroying our soil.

As Franklin Roosevelt said so long ago "A nation that destroys its soil, destroys itself" I guess we forgot.

So we're here to remind you again that your business is helping to trash the planet and to be so conceited to think that someone else will do it or that businesses don't play a much bigger part than the individual is well, conceited.

Meanwhile, here are fast facts from <http://www.reusablebags.com>

- Each year, an estimated 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags are consumed worldwide.

That comes out to over one million per minute. Billions end up as litter each year.

- According to the EPA, over 380 billion plastic bags, sacks and wraps are consumed in the U.S. each year.

- According to The Wall Street Journal, the U.S. goes through 100 billion plastic shopping bags annually and the estimated cost to retailers is \$4 billion.

- Hundreds of thousands of sea turtles, whales and other marine mammals die every year from eating discarded plastic bags mistaken for food.

- Plastic bags don't biodegrade, they photodegrade, breaking down into smaller and smaller toxic bits contaminating soil and waterways and entering the food web when animals accidentally ingest them.

- According to David Barnes, a marine scientist with the British Antarctic Survey, plastic bags have gone "from being rare in the late 80s and early 90s to being almost everywhere from Spitsbergen in the Arctic Ocean all the way down to the Falklands in the south Atlantic.

- Plastic bags are among the 12 items of debris most often found in coastal cleanups, according to the nonprofit Center for Marine Conservation.

- In 2001, Ireland consumed 1.2 billion plastic bags, or 316 per person. An extremely successful plastic bag consumption tax, or PlasTax, introduced in 2002 reduced consumption by 90 percent. About 18,000,000 liters of oil have been saved due to this reduced production. Governments around the world are considering implementing similar measures.

- Each reusable shopping bag has the potential to eliminate hundreds, if not thousands, of plastic bags over its lifetime and reduce our dependence on oil while helping the planet and its inhabitants.

Al and Erin Rosas own and operate organically managed Rosas Farms in Citra and launched the "Go Green, Save Green" challenge to Marion County business owners. Visit <http://www.alrosas.com> or call 888-353-9912.

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