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Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association Calls for Recycling Renaissance

Celebrate Earth Day by engaging “next generation” recyclers

ABINGDON, Md. (April 11, 2018)—This Earth Day (April 22), the **Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association (SMART)** invites “next generation” – Millennials and younger – recyclers to revitalize the way people think about recycling and learn more about how conscious decisions not to throw away textiles can make a significant impact on the environment.

The idea of recycling is no new concept, with its roots extending all the way back to 500 B.C. when the first municipal dump program was created in Athens, Greece. Recycling expanded and transformed as time and technology progressed, but truly gained significant traction and national attention when April 22, 1970 was declared the United States’ first “Earth Day.” A few years later in 1976, Congress passed the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act; at that time, the popular slogan “reduce, reuse, recycle” (“the three R’s”) was born.

“The ‘reduce, reuse, recycle’ motto has been a powerful force in encouraging our nation’s citizens to be mindful of their waste habits over the years,” says Jackie King, Executive Director of SMART. “But, unfortunately, the recycling of our textiles has been largely secluded from the narrative – especially among Baby Boomers and Generation X, who either helped implement the movement or grew up learning to recycle items such as glass and plastic bottles.”

According to the [American Apparel & Footwear Association](#), the average consumer purchases clothing like groceries – at a rate of 1.2 garments per week, roughly 64 a year – less than half of which are still worn on a regular basis after their second year. “A textile simply refers to any material made of interlacing fibers,” says King. “Americans are consuming more and more textile goods year after year, even though a new shirt or pair of jeans rarely ever makes its way out of the closet once its season has passed.”

For Earth Day this year, SMART is paying special attention to the textile recycling habits of Millennials and encourages them to teach their children about how the recycling of textiles can reduce the need for more landfill space and the amount of pollution created by incinerators, as well as provide affordable

clothing to low-income households and individuals around the world. By instilling the importance of textile recycling in future generations, overall recycling habits will be improved.

Why should textiles be top of mind in the three R's? The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found alarming rates of textile waste within the U.S. alone. Out of 16.22 million tons of discarded textiles in 2014, only 2.62 million tons were recycled. Even worse, textile waste in the United States has risen by nearly ten percent from 2013 and overall recycling growth rates have leveled off in the past five years. The good news? Ninety-five percent of all textiles can be recycled or reused in some way.

“Any clothing item or household textile (bed linens, towels, curtains, stuffed animals, purses, shoes, etc.) can be reused and recycled if it is dry and has no odor,” says King. “Even if the item is stained, torn, overly worn or out-of-date, do not throw it away; it has a use in the textile reuse and recycling industry.”

To find the closest SMART member near you to recycle your textiles and for more information on SMART, visit www.smartasn.org. Please direct media inquiries for SMART to Andrea Lynn at 410-420-2001 or by email at andrea.lynn@fallstongroup.com.

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About SMART

Established in 1932, the Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association (SMART) is an international nonprofit trade association that strengthens the economic opportunities of its diverse membership by promoting the interdependence of the for-profit textile recycling industry segments and providing a common forum for networking, education and trade. SMART members use and convert recycled and secondary materials from used clothing, commercial laundries and non-woven, off spec material, new mills ends and paper from around the world. SMART member companies create thousands of jobs worldwide, proving each day you can make money by being social responsible.