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Paul Bailey
Fallston Group – Strategic Communications
410.420.2001 (office)
410.952.3860 (direct)
paul.bailey@fallstongroup.com

SMART Association’s Elementary Education Program Connects with Students and Teachers

2013-2014 School Program Uses Lessons on Textile Recycling to Meet Academic Goals

Bel Air, Maryland (May 20, 2014) – An academic program developed by the Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association (SMART) is yielding positive results among the elementary school teachers who utilized its no-cost lesson plans. The lesson plans focus on the benefits of recycling used clothing, while meeting standardized educational practices. As the international trade association of the for-profit used clothing recycling industry, SMART’s goal is to educate the public about the benefits of recycling all used clothing and household textiles.

In addition to the lesson plans, this year’s educational outreach included the “Recycling Rangers” program to encourage schools to identify “ambassadors” who would promote recycling efforts in their schools. The recycling programs include coordinating used clothing collection drives with SMART member companies. A year-end survey of teachers shows **84%** of teachers feel that since becoming a Recycling Ranger, their students are now familiar with the concept of textile recycling!

“We are very excited about the positive results we are seeing from the elementary school teachers who are utilizing SMART’s lesson plans,” says Jackie King, Executive Director of SMART. “We understand that changing the attitudes and actions of the public requires patience and persistence; you have to plant the seeds early and work diligently toward your goal. SMART is planting the seeds by engaging elementary school teachers and their students with lesson plans and activities that also teach the benefits of recycling used clothing.”

The survey of teachers also showed that **98%** of students and **100%** of teachers think it is important to reuse and recycle. In addition, **85%** of teachers have some interest in coordinating a textile drive at their school. **86%** of the teachers surveyed say they will recommend the program to their colleagues. And, **61%** plan on teaching 10+ more years, meaning they can continue as advocates for SMART for years to come.

King says SMART knows it has to fight the perception that when getting rid of used clothing the only options are donating the items to a charitable organization or throwing them away. With that goal, SMART engaged The Education Center, LLC to develop lesson plans, take-home worksheets, and

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activities designed to teach kindergarten through fifth-grade students the benefits of clothing recycling. This is the second consecutive year SMART provided the free lesson plans through the outlets of The Education Center.

During the 2013-2014 academic year a total of 1,565 teachers registered for the program and a total of 1,485 schools now having a "Recycling Ranger" ambassador. 556,875 students were reached by the program's lesson plans and take-home activities in the 2013-2014 school year. The two-year total of 899,975 students reached by the classroom activities puts SMART well within reach of its goal to engage more than one million students within the first three years of its elementary student educational project.

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency's most recent report on municipal solid waste, 20.44 billion pounds of clothing and footwear was discarded in 2012. An additional 2.58 billion pounds of towels, sheets and pillowcases were also thrown away. The 2012 EPA report indicates only 14.4% of clothing and footwear products were recovered (recycled) and only 17.8% of towels, sheets and pillowcases were recovered.¹ Of the clothing, footwear, towels, sheets, and pillowcases that were thrown away, SMART estimates 95% of those items could have been reused or recycled.²

For additional information on SMART, contact Paul Bailey at the Fallston Group at 410-420-2001 or by email at paul.bailey@fallstongroup.com.

SOURCE:

¹Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States: Tables and Figures for 2012. Tables 15 and 16,

²Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association Media Kit:
http://www.smartasn.org/about/SMART_PressKitOnline.pdf

About

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

For additional information on SMART, visit the association's website at www.SMARTasn.org. The following link will take you directly to informational videos on textile recycling
<http://www.smartasn.org/about/videos.cfm>.

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