

SU Environmental Finance Center facilitates Textile Recovery Summit

By JoAnne Race 10/2/15

The Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center facilitated and hosted the Second Statewide Textile Recovery Stakeholders Summit on Friday October 2 at the Syracuse Center of Excellence. Various New York State stakeholders from municipalities, charities, and the recycling industry shared information and discussed solutions to current challenges in textile recovery.

The partnership of NYSAR3, 'Re-Clothe NY' Textile Recovery Campaign, along with Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association (SMART), and the Council for Textile Recycling (CTR) launched a coalition last year to divert NY's unwanted textiles from the waste stream. Their hard work has already earned them EPA's highest recognition, the 2015 Environmental Champion Award. The campaign produced an innovative set of public communications tools, including a website with a searchable database of textile drop-off locations, a media relations tool kit, and social media platforms. Recycling coordinators from across the state are using these tools to educate local residents about their role in preventing an estimated one billion pounds of post-consumer textile materials worth as much as \$200 million from ending up in the trash each year.

One take home message from the summit is to please remember to donate your unwanted clothing to charities. This has a double advantage in helping others in need and diverting unnecessary waste. The charity is best to decide what to do with donated textiles, which includes footwear. They are familiar with various markets and are able to use most any materials if clean and dry. Condition issues such as stains, tears, missing buttons, or one shoe are marketable to recycling companies for various end uses. There are enormous social, economic, and environmental benefits with increased textile reuse and recycling.

The coalition tackled topics such as dynamic markets, coordinated messaging, maintaining momentum and new strategies for continued success. Other states in the Northeast are already looking at New York's textile recovery model for their own program development.