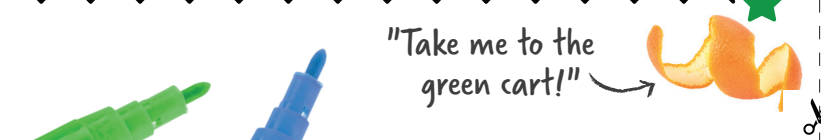
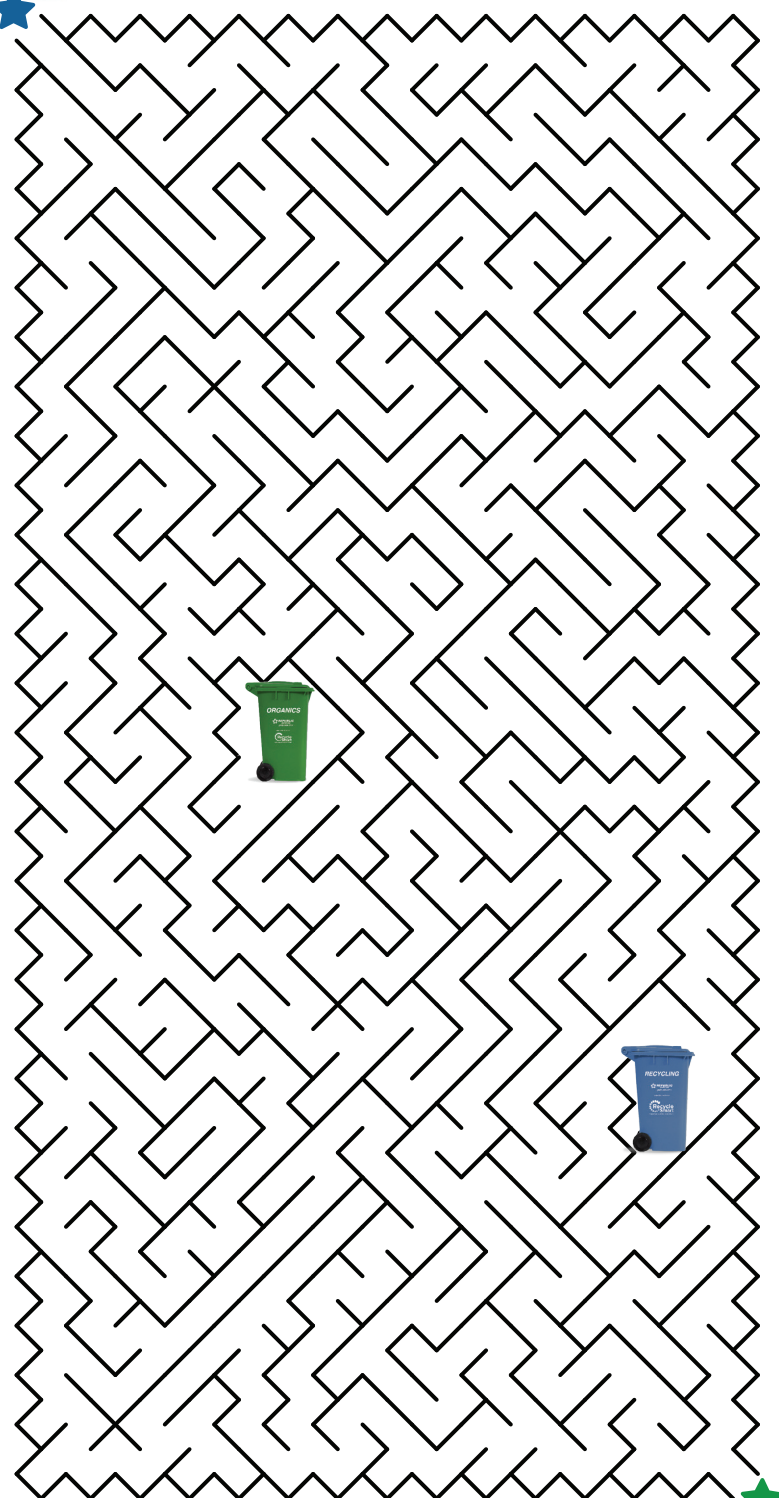
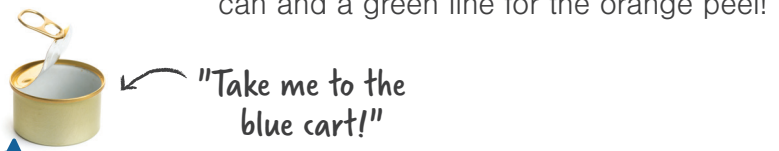




Find the Way!

Help the items find their way to the correct cart in this maze—use a blue line for the can and a green line for the orange peel!



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WINTER 2026

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Safety for truck drivers
- Charge up your know-how
- Loving our local Libraries



A New Shelf for Used Books

We love to hear your stories about recycling! This one comes from Walnut Creek, where a few times a year the Friends of the Walnut Creek Library has a recycled book sale. Volunteers sort through donated books, delivering some to a nursing home or other local organizations, reselling some online, and putting others up for sale at the Friends' Bookstore within the library. Fun fact: the Bookstore also resells CDs, DVDs, and jigsaw puzzles. The most fun way the books get reused is when the group holds its Book Sale Event! At the most recent sale, the Friends sold 200 boxes of books!

The group has a book drop at the library for folks to donate books all year round! If you have books to offer, they accept: children's, young adult, adult, and large-print books in hard cover, trade and paperback form, and CDs, DVDs and jigsaw puzzles. There is a small cart near the front desk for donations. You can drop them during library hours at: Walnut Creek Library 1644 N Broadway, Walnut Creek Find out more about the Friends of the Library at wclibraryfriends.org

YOUR TOP QUESTIONS

Our "Ask a Recycling Bin" tool is getting thousands of questions, and we're so happy you like it! Here are a few of the most common questions and their proper sorting answers:

- Paper milk cartons → **Landfill**
- Plastic milk jug → **Recycling**
- Pizza box → **Organics**
- Leftover bones → **Organics**

Batteries → Tape the ends, place in a clear plastic bag on top of your **Recycling** cart lid (some batteries need to go to the HHW Facility)

You can start your own conversation by texting "Hello Recycling Bin" to (925) 940-5795!

Keep Our Workers Safe!

Never put batteries, needles or electronics in your blue, green or black carts. You might not believe that a battery can burn an entire recycling truck. But it happens—more often than you think! That's why it's critical to take the time to dispose of batteries and other hazards properly.

- If not disposed properly...**
- **Batteries are a major fire risk** that can ignite in trucks or facilities. We're seeing truck, cart, and facility fires like we never have before. Please take the time to tape your battery ends and place them in a separate bag on top of your cart.
 - **Needles and syringes are biohazards** that pose a threat to people working at material recycling facilities—your recyclables are sorted by hand.

Let's do right by the people working so hard to keep our communities healthy and sustainable.

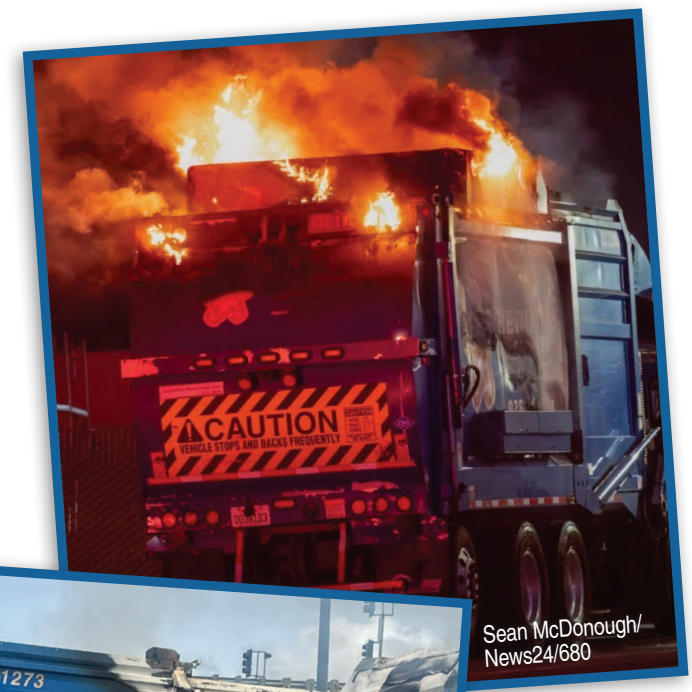


Keep unpleasant surprises off the conveyor belt!



POKE AROUND AT RESOURCES

To learn how to properly dispose of batteries, needles, and other household hazardous waste, scan the QR code or visit RecycleSmart.org/HHW. You don't have to go anywhere to order a free mail-back package for your sharps at sharpstakebackcalifornia.org!



Sean McDonough/News24/680

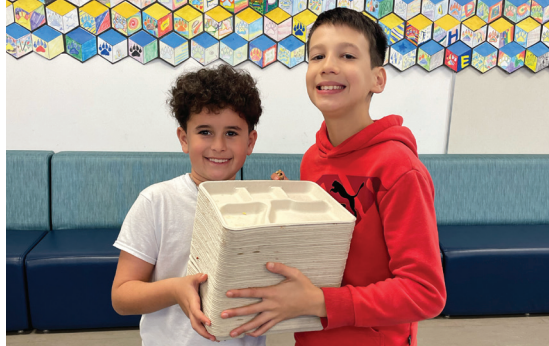


These photos show the real danger of battery fires.



Cart burned by battery fire





Parkmead Students Have it Sorted Out

Walnut Creek's Parkmead Elementary is making their campus more sustainable! Parkmead has been working with the RecycleSmart schools program to help students and staff learn how to recycle more and waste less. They've added color-coded bins, clear signage, and student-led activities with their "Sort Smart" program.

Because students and staff are often unsure where items go, student Green Teams are teaching their community proper sorting. So far they've used posters, classroom demonstrations, and "Sort it Right" challenges. This program gives TK to fifth graders the power to make an

impact on their campus! It's also changing how they see themselves and their role in making their community more sustainable.

What's more? Parkmead won our Contra Costa Recycles grant for their next Sort Smart phase! Here they are accepting a big check last December. Great work, Parkmead!

Visit [RecycleSmart.org/Schools](https://www.recycle-smart.org/Schools) if you're inspired to start or support a similar effort at a local school. You'll find resources from videos to signage and lesson plans, as well as grant opportunities for schools and students!



NO PLASTIC? FANTASTIC!

2026 is the year we say goodbye to plastic bags. In January, legislation went into effect banning plastic bags from grocery stores, food marts, and other retailers. Businesses must offer recycled paper bags (10 cents each) for customers, but you can go one step further—bring your own reusable bags on your next grocery run! Visit [CalRecycle.ca.gov](https://www.calrecycle.ca.gov) to learn more about the new bag requirements.

In other plastic-related news: Don't put plastic liners in your blue cart. Keep your recycling loose and free!



Recharge Your Battery Know-how

Tossing batteries can cause major damage to our local environment. This guide shows you how to dispose of different battery types safely and responsibly.

Check labels to tell between alkaline and lithium

Sort your batteries for safety

ALKALINE

- Put in a bag on top of your cart

Alkaline batteries can leach into groundwater and poison our soils when sent to landfill.

LITHIUM

- Tape battery ends and put in a bag on top of your cart

Lithium and lithium-ion batteries can ignite—in your home, in our trucks, or at recycling facilities. Proper disposal prevents dangerous and costly fires.

ELECTRONICS

- Set out on Reuse Day
- Drop electronics off at Concord Recycling or Rapid Recycle in Pacheco. Visit their websites to see what's acceptable.

Lithium and lithium-ion batteries can ignite—in your home, in our trucks, or at recycling facilities. Proper disposal prevents dangerous and costly fires.

RECYCLING KEEPS US ALL SAFER.

Taping lithium battery ends prevents fires

KEEPING TABS ON BATTERIES

The Knolles have a clever solution, as usual! Here's Real Recycler Laura's advice:

We keep our batteries very organized in a drawer. We sort them as brand new, used, and a bag of "dead" (add a roll of tape for those "dead" lithium batteries!). It's too easy to lose track of which batteries may still have some life.

We keep a voltage meter nearby to check the remaining battery life.

For holiday items that take a battery (such as Halloween decorations), I remove the battery after the holiday (versus storing them all year with the battery, which can then leak), and use the battery for something else.



Need more info?



Editor, Janna McKay
Janna@RecycleSmart.org

For tips, resources and other recycling services!

www.RecycleSmart.org
925-906-1801
Authority@RecycleSmart.org

For questions about your bi-annual Reuse Day contact Mt. Diablo Resource Recovery at 925-692-2286 or visit [RecycleSmart.org/cleanup](https://www.RecycleSmart.org/cleanup)



Organics, Recycling and Landfill

925-685-4711

For questions concerning your recycling, organics or landfill carts, billing, new service, vacation hold requests, computer and TV collection, special cleanups or to request motor oil recycling kits and kitchen food scraps containers.



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Sewing Success for My Closet

Katherine L., Orinda

Dear RecycleSmart, Instead of throwing out old clothes, I now donate, repurpose, or upcycle them!

Textile waste generates greenhouse gases and chemicals from the plastics and dyes can leach, causing harm to the environment. I've taken it upon myself to reduce my textile waste and give my clothes new life.

Learning basic sewing skills has made it so I can repair and alter clothing. The Contra Costa Library holds events each month, including sewing classes! I've taken advantage of these events to improve my skills. Find them by searching "sewing" at [ccllib.org](https://www.ccllib.org)

When my pieces can't be fixed, I keep the fabric for other craft projects. I also donate gently used clothing to my local thrift shop. There is so much life for clothing beyond your use of them.



HAVE TIPS TO SHARE?

Send your ideas to Authority@RecycleSmart.org