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## Letters from MRFY - Dumpster Diving and New Identities

Well, it's Groundhog Day again and, here at the MRF, our illustrious bales of aluminum stacked in the snow at 412 Big Bay Road did not see their shadow, which means there is another 8 weeks until the Christmas decorations at Walmart go on display. When I write this little ditty for the Gazette, I try to interject a little humor as well as some tidbit of recycling wisdom, but I do need to take a very serious moment to talk about protecting your identity.

I have been baling paper recently and in the stacks of paper that our customers throw out in the paper recycling bins, I ran across some very sensitive documents that contained the following information: a financial portfolio that included a withdrawal from a 401k plan, the bank routing number, the bank account number which the funds were to be deposited, as well as the social security number of the owner.

On average, there are 5.8 million fraud complaints leading to roughly 6.1 billion dollars in associated lost revenue. Most of these will occur through online scams but there are people who will go to landfills and dig through trash in order to find personal information. Some people refer to these individuals as "dumpster divers"; however those of us in the BIDD (Brotherhood of International Dumpster Divers) take exception to this label. I joined the BIDD in my freshman year while attending Adrian College. When school ends and apartments, townhouses and dormitories are emptied, the sidewalks are packed with couches, chairs, dressers, televisions, VCRs, and other household items. This was all fair game for reclamation and, in the spring edition of the BIDD Annual publication titled "College Towns are a Bonanza for the Brotherhood" (McGill, James, Madeup Publishing Ltd; April 1995) it states explicitly "personal information including names, social security numbers, tax statements and ex-girlfriend/boyfriend numbers are expressly forbidden by dumpster diving etiquette, punishable by expulsion from the BIDD by a majority vote of the regional board..."

In all seriousness, and since it is tax season, please take time to shred (or burn) documents that contain sensitive information (but not in an Arthur Anderson/Enron kind of way). You don't want to wake up one morning and find that the new credits cards in your name have funded a Limited-Edition Gucci Xbox, a 1992 bottle of Screaming Eagle Cabernet Sauvignon, a pack of Swisher Sweets and a 6-pack of crunchy tacos from Taco Bell.

MRF life continues. This warming trend of temps in the 30s is cause for all things "outdoorsy" including baling, sorting propane and aerosol canisters, as well as preparing for a (possible) boat shutdown. Evan has been hauling boxes as part of our winter procedures but, with the extended ferry season, we are well-positioned to make it into spring comfortably with no storage pressures. Office cleaning is ongoing and I'm preparing to outline the "Wall of MRFstory! A Brief but Wonderful History of the MRF." Pictures are rolling in from various outlets, as well as a master's thesis on Madeline Island trash and other assorted items. If anyone has pictures from MRF past and the faces that have graced this space, please feel free to drop them off at the MRF office and I will make copies and get the originals back to you.

A always: Be MRF-tastic!

**Martin A. Curry**  
Recycling Supervisor

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