Remember the 4 R's: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair

This month I am sharing a statement jointly composed by Partners for the Public Good and Greater Buffalo Recycling Alliance:

The Buffalo Public Schools Should Come into Compliance on Recycling

Buffalo is starting to make progress on recycling more and wasting less. The City of Buffalo is to be commended for making recycling a priority. Mayor Byron Brown, Public Works Commissioner Steve Stepniak, and Recycling Coordinator Susan Attridge have worked hard to educate Buffalo residents on how easy it is to recycle and how good it does for the environment and for the City's finances.

Did you know, for example, that recycling an aluminum can reduces energy use by 95 percent? Or that every ton of paper we recycle saves 17 trees and 7000 gallons of water? Did you realize that recycling saves the taxpayers money by reducing the fees the City must pay for its garbage pick-up and land filling?

Unfortunately, some businesses, non-profit organizations, and even government agencies have not yet got the message. One particular embarrassment is the Buffalo Public Schools. It turns out that most city schools have only partial recycling programs. Very few of them are in compliance with the City’s law, which requires all schools to sort out all recyclable goods, including paper, plastic, glass, and metal, and not throw them in the garbage. In addition to breaking an important law, the schools are teaching their students a bad lesson: that it is okay to throw away recyclable goods. The students then take that lesson home with them, and our residential recycling rates suffer, too.

Setting up a full recycling program at a school is not that hard, and some have done it. The Greater Buffalo Recycling Alliance offers a simple guide with tips for a successful program. Most schools already recycle cardboard and paper. All they need to do is add glass, plastic, and metal. The City will provide them with free totes and pick-up service, so it will not even cost them any money. In fact, it should save them money, as their garbage bills should go down when they begin reducing the amount of waste in their dumpsters.