

## Recyclables a treasure trove for learners



*Every year discarded items from manufacturers heading to landfills are diverted to a Mississauga warehouse so that educators and child care providers can access them and turn them into creative and inspiring art, science and classroom projects. The project is run by Family Day Care Service through a program called Creative Zone. For more information, visit [www.familydaycare.com](http://www.familydaycare.com)*

**By:** Radhika Panjwani

**September 29, 2008 02:11 PM** - What's trash for some is much coveted treasure for a group of educators. More than 300 of them — teachers and child care providers — lined up at a Mississauga warehouse recently to rummage through a treasure trove of recyclable stuff to take back to their classrooms.

The much-anticipated event, which embraces the philosophy of reduce, reuse and recycle, was the fall semi-annual sale by the Creative Zone, a charitable organization run by Family Day Care Services in partnership with the Peel District School Board (PDSP), Child Development Resource Connection Peel and PLASP Child Care Services.

The program, now in its eighth year, provides teachers with free material for art, science and general classroom projects. Creative Zone's mission is to encourage children to accept the concept of reusing materials that would otherwise have gone to landfills, said Carrie Gemmell, the organization's fund developer.

"Amateur Rembrandts let their imaginations soar and future scientists get inspired by an array of items from giant-sized cardboard to calendars and books to scraps of fabric and plastic," Gemmell explained. "New uses become clear as the kids re-shape the objects into fascinating, practical and often quite beautiful works of art: plumbing tubes become robots, defective CDs make great eyes, plastic bins can house insect science projects. The possibilities are endless."

The enthusiastic crowd grabbed the surplus items donated by companies and manufacturers. The popular picks included items such as fabric, plastic, CDs, picture frames, wallpaper, socks and medical supplies such as test tubes and petri dishes.

The educators line up before the doors open because they are able to get stuff that enhance their learning program and it is all available at no cost," said Creative Zone program manager Cheryl Rogers. "It reduces the need for them to use their own money to buy things for learning activities."

Sharon Huxley, a teacher with the PDSB, said she frequents the Creative Zone warehouse regularly. She said her Grade 4 class has used fabric to create braided rugs for a project depicting the lives of Pioneers. Another time, the children made a six-foot tepee.

"As a teacher if we had to buy all the stuff we get for free from Creative Zone, we would be poor," Huxley said. "A lot of the programs will not be happening because Creative Zone supports teachers and child care providers with materials that are going to be destroyed or thrown away. And that to me is one of the biggest assets of the program."

Rogers said donations are urgently needed to keep the unique program running because the three-year funding by the Ontario Trillium Foundation has run its course. Creative Zone, she notes, incurs huge costs for transporting goods, maintaining staff and operating its 2,500 square foot warehouse.

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