

Dumpster of 'usable stuff' a nasty Earth Week find

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Dave Way sorts through a dumpster of unsold items left over from the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre Flea Market. photo Mike Wakefield, North Shore News

One charity's trash could be another man's treasure.

A West Vancouver man is hoping to see the District of West Vancouver be a little bit more prudent with what it does with unwanted goods after finding a dumpster full of items left over from the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre Flea Market.

Dave Way attended the market, which ran at the West Vancouver Ice Rink two weekends ago, but when he passed by the next week, he was put off by the amount of stuff being thrown away.

"I saw people with sledge hammers smashing a desk or chest of drawers or something into bits," he said.

Way spoke with the organizers, who told him they were trying to place as much of the unsold goods as possible with other charities but, he said, there were still many good finds bound for the dump.

"They told me only totally unsellable junk was going into the dumpster but I had a peek on the Wednesday because it was filled right to the brim and there was what looked like five-year-old hockey skates... and flippers – lots of usable stuff," he said. "We ended up taking an ice cream maker away that was thrown away and worth \$90, completely functional."

It was particularly irritating that it happened during Earth Week, Way added.

"It just seems to me that one would reflect on all that solid waste and find another home for the stuff," he said.

But organizers estimate 75 per cent of the items at the flea market were sold, and the majority of the rest was either donated or recycled.

Only a small amount is tossed out, according to Jeff McDonald, spokesman for the District of West Vancouver.

"Having said that, there are items that cannot be sold that require disposal – those are plastics that can't be recycled because they're cracked or broken ... broken picture frames, broken or cracked chairs. Helmets are not accepted by charities. Car seats, strollers, high chairs and cribs are not accepted by any charities – and Christmas decorations that are in poor condition."

Among the charities that get first crack at the leftovers are Developmental Disabilities Association, Covenant House, West Vancouver Adult Day Centre, a women's shelter, Shelter to Home, the Lions Gate Hospital thrift store, the Red Cross and the Salvation Army, which took 11 loads.

McDonald said the event raised about \$75,000.

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