

NEWS RELEASE



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For Immediate Release

LITTER INTO GOLD: CIGARETTE METER REACHES 100,000 BUTTS

San Rafael, CA – September 19, 2013 – [San Rafael Clean](#) (SRC), a coalition of local agencies and individual volunteers, is celebrating the cleanup efforts of the community during a four-month campaign to get cigarette litter off city streets. The campaign is nearing its goal of 100,000 cigarette butts collected in San Rafael. For every butt collected in the city and in the “Cigarette Eater Meter,” an artsy and educational receptacle that’s been on display in the San Rafael City Plaza since the end of May, two cents go to a local charity. A local business, Bellam Self Storage and Boxes, and an anonymous donor are donating a total of \$2,000 to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. A ceremony to officially present the check is scheduled for 6 pm on Thursday, September 26th, in the downtown San Rafael City Plaza, during the final Farmer’s Market of the season.

The current effort is part of an ongoing SRC campaign to make San Rafael a litter-free city. Cigarette butts constitute a persistent form of litter on San Rafael city streets and across the state. Over 10,000 butts are littered every 3-4 days in San Rafael alone, and make up the most prevalent form of litter collected during Coastal Cleanup Day each year. Cigarettes are also a dangerous form of litter. They contain chemicals found in batteries, toilet cleaner, and car exhaust. Cigarette butts are toxic to wildlife and are made of cellulose acetate, a form of plastic that never biodegrades.

After the success of a pilot “buy-back” project last year, SRC sought new ways to keep the attention on cigarette litter. Cleanups make a big difference in reducing litter, but SRC recognized that in order to really make a dent in the problem we need to stop litter at the source. The Cigarette Eater Meter campaign was created with the goal of influencing behavior and encouraging smokers to dispose of their cigarettes responsibly by making each deposit a donation to charity.

Along with the large amount of butts deposited in the meter by community members, the Downtown Streets Team, a new program that employs the homeless to clean up city streets, has been helping collect butts as well. SRC volunteer Libby McQuiston makes sure that all of the butts are weighed, counted and then sent to Terracycle, an organization that up-cycles the butts into useful items like industrial pallets and ashtrays.

The meter will be leaving the plaza at the end of September and will be available for loan to other organizations and municipalities. To find out more, visit www.sanrafaelclean.org.

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