

Becky Aguilar

Subject: FW: Thank You

From: Vargas, David E. x3771 <VargasDE@co.monterey.ca.us>
Sent: Friday, May 1, 2020 10:02 AM
To: Tim Flanagan <tflanagan@mrwmd.org>
Subject: Thank You

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Hey Tim,

Once again, I wanted to thank you and all your guys for everything. I can't tell you how nice it was to have everyone's support and understanding as we processed the warehouse. Not only was it a tragic and unimaginable set up circumstances, but we had to disrupt your daily routine/activities. You and all you're employees we're always willing to do anything they could to assist in any way. My hats off to you. You run a very professional organization!

Thanks again,

David Vargas, Detective Sergeant

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The packaging challenge

Our goals are to create smarter options for a greener planet

by SHERI FLIES



Sheri Flies is Costco vice president of global sustainability and compliance.

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Over the past year, the most frequent question we received about sustainability was: What is Costco going to do about packaging? It's a fair question, and we are doing quite a bit. However, there are no easy solutions, because the answers are complex.

★ First, the packaging industry is in transition, as is the recycling and recovery of these materials. Next, there currently aren't enough programs to collect and recover certain types of packaging; also, regulations can vary from one city to the next. Several other key questions need to be addressed: What viable alternatives are available to plastic, and how do we make sure that switching to paper-based or compostable products doesn't contribute to deforestation or more carbon emissions? What are the trade-offs and

environmental impacts when choosing one type of material over another? We also look at greenhouse gas emissions and the use of fossil fuel and water to determine the overall environmental impact of the packaging, which is called life-cycle assessment.

With all of this in mind, over the past year we have taken a global, company-wide approach and have two basic goals: Reduce our operational packaging waste, and provide sustainable options to our members without compromising food safety and product quality—all while ensuring our packaging complies with laws and regulations, reduces materials and communicates effectively with our members.

Our strategy covers four key areas, outlined here.

Reducing packaging overall

It makes sense to start with this initial step: Reduce the amount of packaging we use overall while continuing to protect the product and minimize the overall environmental impact. In some cases, we have been able to eliminate plastic altogether, such as swapping plastic for paperboard in our sheet cake trays, removing plastic hangers in some clothes or replacing plastic bags with compostable ones. If we can't eliminate plastic, we try to use less of it, through redesign.

The initial result: We reduced our annual plastic packaging by 6 million pounds in 2019 and are continuing to further reduce it. Similarly, we are looking for more ways to cut back on paper and cardboard.

Using more widely recyclable materials

Plastic and cardboard will be a part of packaging for the foreseeable future while new options are being developed. Our approach today is to increase the recycled content and certified fiber in this packaging. The goal is for plastic packaging to be made from recycled plastic. We have been able to make progress toward this in several areas, such as increasing the recycled content in our Kirkland Signature™ 16-ounce water bottles to 50% in the U.S.

Likewise, our goal is to use more recycled fibers in our paper-based packaging. All of our U.S. Costco.com shipping boxes are made from 100% recycled fibers and are widely recyclable. The goal is for all fiber to come from certified forest management programs, with a preference for the Forest Stewardship Council.

Increasing recycling and composting

While we understand that not all plastic is currently recyclable due to a lack of available infrastructure and market demand from manufacturers, our goal is for all plastic packaging to be recycle-ready and labeled correctly, so when better recovery and recycling systems are in place, the packaging will be ready.

The first step is to eliminate materials that can't be recycled or composted, such as Styrofoam. Meanwhile, we are seeking to use materials that are compostable, for items such as straws, cups and other packaging of food items, in our Food Courts, fresh meat department and more.

Educating employees and members

In striving to truly make an impact, perhaps nothing is more important than how we can engage Costco employees, suppliers and members. We have held a series of creative meetings within our company and with our suppliers to outline goals and strategies. We are improving our labeling so our members will know what can be recycled and composted.

We believe this is the start of a new journey in understanding and developing options that work for the product, our members and the environment. While we don't have all of the answers, we are making continuous improvement as packaging solutions also continue to improve. For full details about our packaging efforts, visit the Costco Sustainability Commitment on Costco.com (search "Sustainability"; then select "Merchandising" and "Packaging"). ■

WHEN PLASTIC MAKES SENSE

Kirkland Signature egg cartons are an example of when recycle-ready plastic creates a sustainable option, because they reduce food waste, also a priority for us.

These plastic cartons prevent breakage, saving over 9 million eggs a year from landfills and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. They use 100% recycled PET (polyethylene terephthalate), which makes them 40% lighter than pulp cartons.

These lighter-weight and sturdier cartons enable our shippers to pack 50% more cartons on a truck, reducing truck trips from the farms to our locations and therefore reducing carbon emissions.—SF

Testing chemicals

Sustainable packaging also includes testing labels and materials for chemicals of concern to ensure the

materials are safe for human and environmental health. You can learn more about the testing we do by visiting the Costco Sustainability Commitment

online at Costco.com (search "Sustainability"; then select "Merchandising" and "Chemical Management").—SF

Sustainability Was Corporate America's Buzzword. This Crisis Changes

That. From Unilever to Starbucks to GM, corporations pause some social-responsibility programs or put them on the back burner



By [John D. Stoll](#) May 1, 2020 12:56pm ET

Lauren Singer had spent the last eight years living a “zero-waste” life and building an eco-friendly business off of it. Then, the coronavirus pandemic confronted the chief executive of New York-based Package Free with an existential crisis.

“When the reality of Covid-19 set in,” she posted on Instagram, “I made some choices that went against the way I have lived my life for almost a decade.”

Today, every occupant of every C-suite is trying to figure out what they’re willing to throw overboard as the economic storm spawned by the pandemic is swamping their ships.

Businesses that were planning to help save the world are now simply saving themselves

“Action expresses priorities,” Gandhi said. Amid extreme distress, one immediate priority overwhelms all others. Entities from one-cell organisms to multinational conglomerates shut down everything except what they need to survive. Efforts once deemed critical suddenly feel like luxuries. That feeling might last a month, a quarter or a year, but consequences can linger.

“Belief in a new ‘sustainability’ model of capitalism is growing but will it endure?” Paul Pellizzari, the sustainability chief for Hard Rock International, wrote in a piece published Monday on the environmental media site GreenBiz. “Will mad scrambles to save profitability and market capitalization stall or kill a new paradigm?”

History suggests this new paradigm is probably on the back burner.

Mr. Pellizzari said the Corporate Social Responsibility movement, or CSR, was just getting off the ground in 2001 when the 9/11 terrorist attacks happened. “CSR did not die,” he wrote, but “its immediate priority waned.”

When the financial crisis hit in 2008, companies again went into survival mode. “Spending on community and philanthropic programs and internal capacity building dropped,” he said.

As the economy roared back, CSR became chic. Investors like BlackRock Inc. pushed for more sustainable practices. Retailers and restaurants reduced waste because customers were willing to pay for greener options.

In recent weeks, however, executives have called a timeout. They’ve signaled that years of cost-cutting lie ahead.

“If the worst predictions for economic seizure prove true, many businesses will be worse off than in either 2001 or 2008,” Mr. Pellizzari wrote. “Those companies who retrench to starvation fundamentals almost certainly will freeze continued investment in impact and purpose for some period.”

An outside dining area of the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino stands empty while closed in Atlantic City, N.J. Hard Rock’s corporate motto, “doing well by doing good,” has led it to create campaigns to fight hunger and contribute millions of dollars to disaster relief.

Hard Rock’s hotels, casinos and restaurants have temporarily laid off workers all over the country, according to press reports. It isn’t clear when those people will be employed again.



Package Free CEO Lauren Singer stands in her store in New York City. Photo: Package Free



An outside dining area of the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino has been empty while closed in Atlantic City, N.J. Photo: The Associated Press

Others are making their own cuts in response to the downturn. Unilever PLC suspended a number of its “change initiatives” that tackle complex social and environmental problems. (The company’s initiatives include water conservation and sustainable farming.) General Motors Co. killed its car-sharing program. Ford Motor Co. canceled an electric-car project and postponed autonomous vehicles. Starbucks has paused the practice of filling reusable cups.

Companies have delayed sustainability reports. Airlines are asking for climate-regulations to be relaxed. New York, San Francisco and other cities or states have temporarily waived plastic- bag bans.

Some of these measures are in direct response to a health crisis. It’s hard to test robocars when engineers are stuck at home; hard to refill a coffee cup when a potentially contagious person used it.

But it’s unclear if consumers, businesses and governments will have the money or the appetite to save the planet with the same gusto that existed pre-pandemic.

General Electric CEO Larry Culp, already knee-deep in a turnaround, Wednesday laid out the balancing act most companies will have to replicate. The company has slashed at least 25% of its budget and could tighten further.

“We don’t want to spend one dollar more than we need to this year, all the while making sure we don’t shortchange the long term,” he said in an interview with CNBC.

Institutional shareholders recognize the deck is being reshuffled.

“When we exit this crisis, the world will be different,” BlackRock CEO Larry Fink wrote in his annual letter. “Investors’ psychology will change. Business will change. Consumption will change.”

BlackRock said it realizes “that in the near-term companies may need to reallocate resources to address immediate priorities in these uncertain times,” but it would be watching as the crisis eases. “Given our long-term approach to stewardship, we will continue to monitor company disclosures and expect a return to companies focusing on material sustainability management and reporting in due course.”

Judith Samuelson, a vice president at the Aspen Institute think tank, said the pandemic doesn’t give license to executives to simply go back to the old way of doing business.

“People have a long memory,” Ms. Samuelson said. “What companies do right now matters.”

BP PLC isn’t the first place one might look for a sustainability blueprint for this new era. But the battered oil company might actually have a plan that makes sense.

During a conference call this week, Chief Executive Bernard Looney said the company would slash spending by \$3 billion, or 25%. The company is preserving its dividend and won’t cut jobs for now.

Another thing it won’t tamper with: its recent 2050 carbon-neutrality commitment. Mr. Looney said the short-term cuts will help BP recover quickly enough to keep intact a climate pledge that he deems strategically necessary.

“The pandemic I think only adds to the challenge for oil in the future. I think we’re all living and working very differently,” he said. Mr. Looney said the long-term outlook for BP must include lower dependence on fossil-fuels and a turn toward renewable options.

Ms. Singer, the eco-conscious CEO, told me Thursday she has spent the last month thinking how to shift plans. She realizes that many people won’t share her values coming out of the crisis, but she still wants them to be able to afford her products and a greener lifestyle.

Ms. Singer said she has spent the last month talking with investors and colleagues about potentially adding capacity to her business, find ways to make items more affordable or potentially raise another round of funding.

“If you’ve lost your job, you’re not thinking about sustainability,” she said. “The average consumer does not have the resources to shop in a way that always protects the environment.”

She needs to build a business that reflects a new reality. Taking on new investors or employing more of a mass-production strategy, however, will invite criticism.

“When you’re forced to prioritize, it opens up your business to scrutiny.”



Starbucks has paused the practice of refilling reusable cups.

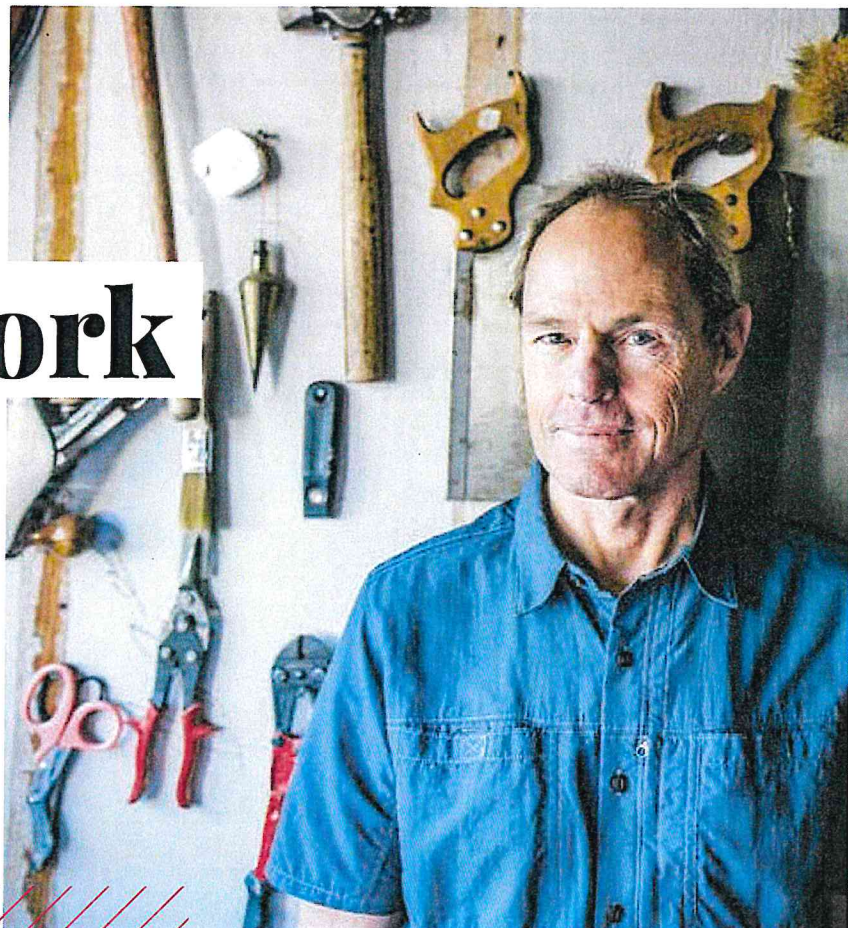
PHOTO: DYLAN STEWART/ZUMA PRESS

PURSUIITS

Make It Work

When in doubt, don't throw it out.

BY JUNE D. BELL



BLATANTLY DISREGARDING the “Do not disassemble” warning on a Panasonic iron, Pascal Bruyere and J.D. Pruett, '23, removed the screws holding the soleplate to the shell, pulled the pieces apart and tugged on the iron's cord. Instead of retracting smartly into the base, the cord made only halfhearted efforts at rewinding.

“It's not like I've worn it out by using it,” owner Jeanne Schaefer quipped. The 15-year-old iron still worked, yet the lazy cord bothered her. A replacement would cost as little as \$25—but discarding hers seemed wrong. “Think of all the resources that went into making it,” the Palo Alto resident said. “The fact that we'd just put it in the landfill is why we're in trouble. We just keep using up the earth's resources.”

Unable to fix it herself, Schaefer headed to the Repair Café, a quarterly pop-up fix-it workshop in Palo Alto where eco-minded engineering students and other volunteers perform free repairs on almost anything that visitors can haul in.

Since the café's debut in 2012, Palo Alto

fixers have matched wits with more than 4,600 broken items, including coffee makers that won't brew, beaded jewelry that has come unstrung, musical instruments that won't play, zippers that won't zip, bicycles that won't brake and lamps that won't light. The Repair Café is modeled on a concept that began in Amsterdam in 2009 and has spread globally to more than 2,000 locations.

When Peter Skinner, '78, read a 2012 *New York Times* feature about the fix-it frenzy sweeping the Netherlands, he was intrigued and inspired. He told his wife, Marie Earl, '78, MLA '98, that he planned to launch the United States' first Repair Café. She was justifiably dubious. “I can't fix anything,” Skinner admits with a laugh. “I'm a total hack.”

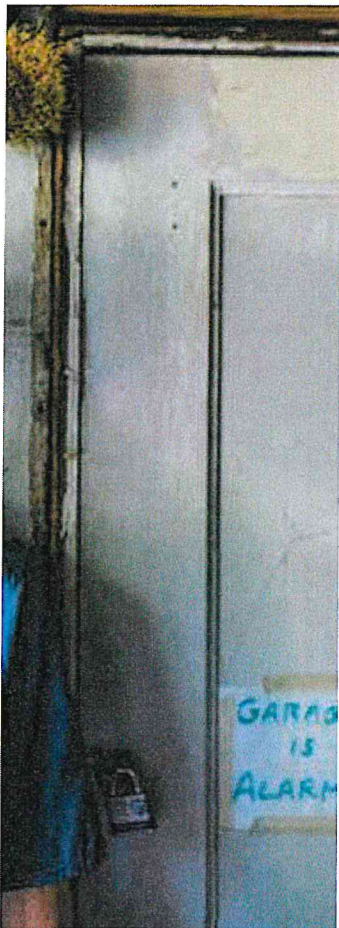
But Skinner was confident he could corral a group of friends the couple had known since they were undergrads and tap their collective expertise. Libby Dame, '79, was a longtime City of Palo Alto employee who had helped launch programs around energy conservation and solar power. Her husband, John Eaton, '78, MS '84, was a

longtime tinkerer who had worked at Stanford's original recycling center and handled energy conservation for on-campus housing. Today, he designs and develops medical devices. Bob Wenzlau, '78, MS '81, had started the university's recycling center and, later, Palo Alto's curbside recycling and composting programs. Now he's the CEO of Terradex Inc., a local firm that advises on how to treat and handle hazardous and contaminated sites.

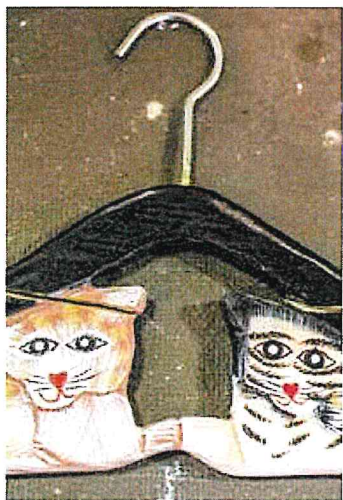
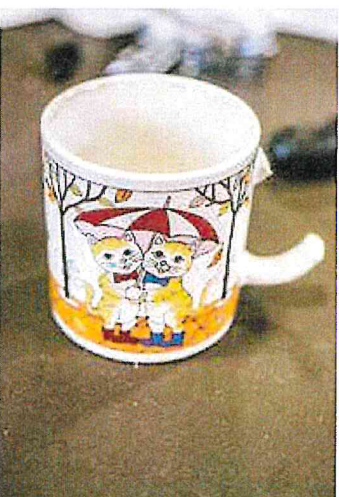
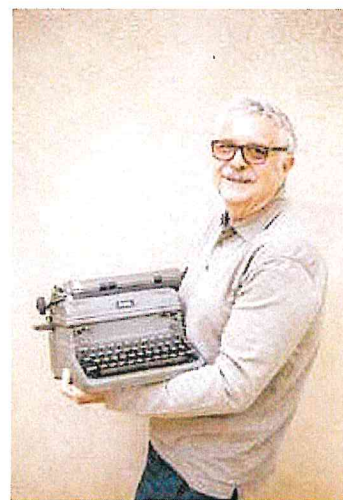
The group worked their contacts to find a location and support. The Museum of American Heritage in downtown Palo Alto offered its space, and Ace Hardware donated supplies. (GreenWaste, which collects the city's trash and recycling, later provided a trailer to hold supplies.) The first event, in October 2012, attracted media coverage and about 100 people. The next Repair Café drew twice as many, and about 140 people attended each of the four 2019 Repair Cafés.

Palo Alto's Repair Cafés are staffed by several dozen tool-toting volunteer fixers, often including Stanford faculty and engineering students eager to put their

PHOTOGRAPHY: TIMOTHY ARCHIBALD



THE KEEPERS: At a recent Repair Café, volunteer fixers were able to salvage about 75 percent of the 202 items brought in. Co-founder Skinner (opposite) credits the café with changing his life's course.



repair skills to good use. They make no judgments about whether an item is worth the time and effort to repair, no matter how old, obsolete or worn it is. If an owner deems it worth keeping, it's fair game. "Most of the people who come have the same mentality," Eaton says. "They could easily buy a new hair dryer, but they don't want to throw a perfectly good item away."

Dame and Earl greet visitors and log repair requests. Visitors nibble donated bagels and sip coffee in a sunny courtyard until a fixer is available. Owners explain the issue and watch—or sometimes even lend a hand—as the fixer tackles the problem.

Successful repairs are celebrated with the ringing of a handbell, which periodically punctuates the chatter of fixers and visitors. Repair Café fixers are able to completely or partially repair about two-thirds of the items they handle, making a symbolic and personal dent in a vast amount of trash. Between 1960 and 2017, the amount of waste sent to U.S. landfills roughly tripled, jumping to 39 million tons, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, even though the U.S. population hadn't even doubled. Despite recycling mandates, environmental awareness and zero-waste initiatives, 52 percent of the waste generated in the United States in 2017 was buried in landfills. (Stanford sends 36 percent of its trash to the landfill and is working to cut that amount to 10 percent by 2030.)

Modern appliances would have much longer lives if engineers designed them to be easily repaired. "We struggle with plastic devices that can't be separated [into components]," Wenzlau says. "The idea of disassembly isn't built into products. If we have a zero-waste goal, how can we keep this material out of the landfill? Repair fits in really well with a zero-waste strategy."

Durable, cheap to manufacture and lightweight to ship, plastic is ubiquitous in consumer goods. Plastic components are typically fused through ultrasonic welding, a process that uses vibration to heat components until they melt together. An ultrasonic weld eliminates the need for screws, glues and fasteners, which saves resources. "But the flip side is that when something does break," Eaton says, "it makes it very difficult to actually fix it."

Stanford engineering students like

Pruett learn this lesson firsthand at the Repair Café. More than 340 Stanford engineering students have apprenticed at cafés in Palo Alto, Mountain View, Santa Clara and San Jose.

"I sell it as hands-on engineering," says apprentice coordinator Lawrence Garwin, '87, who spent 26 years building houses with natural materials, working on tall ships and creating off-the-grid electrical systems



ITEMS FIXED

ELECTRONIC KEYBOARD
TOY PIG WITH BROKEN LEG
GYROSCOPE
VINTAGE RADIO
MANY LAMPS



ITEMS NOT FIXED

ALARM CLOCK
MICROWAVE OVEN
PAPER SHREDDER
CD PLAYER
DESK CHAIR

before completing his bachelor's degree in 2013. While working with fellow engineering students on group projects, he discovered that few had experience with tools and repairs.

Under the tutelage of skilled Repair Café volunteers, students hone practical skills and see how smart design choices can reduce waste. "A lot of them will become designers, and we want them to design for repair rather than obsolescence," Garwin says.

Students and seasoned fixers draw inspiration from vintage goods. They've had stellar success accessing and then repairing the inner workings of 1950s-era drink mixers, mid-century blenders, manual typewriters, adding machines and decades-old box fans.

Longtime volunteer Todd Smith says one

of his most memorable repairs was a vintage Singer sewing machine. Employees at several repair shops had declared it a loss, but the owner had a sentimental attachment to the machine. Smith, a Stanford physics professor emeritus, eventually located and replaced a broken wire. The machine sprang back to life, and the owner wept with joy.

Those satisfying fixes continue to motivate Skinner as Palo Alto's fix-it program approaches the eight-year mark. "The Repair Café is this really tiny thing," he says, "but it's at least something that people can participate in at a local level that makes them feel like they're contributing in some sort of way."

Skinner credits the Repair Café with changing the course of his career. In 2016, he transitioned from finance consulting to his current role as CFO of the Monterey Regional Waste Management District, which emphasizes waste reduction and transforms waste into energy or reusable materials. "I can't say that it was part of a grand plan, but it has been sort of a logical evolution for me," he says. "And I feel like I'm doing something that gets me out of bed in the morning."

Of the 202 items that fixers examined during a recent café's four hours, 75 percent were fixed partially or, like Schaefer's iron, completely. She wasn't surprised. At previous cafés, fixers had replaced the missing rivets on a pair of her pruning shears, and a mechanical engineering student had unstuck the valves on her son's trumpet, which she then donated to a music program. Schaefer watched as Bruyere and Pruett disassembled her iron and discussed possible remedies.

"The spring that rewinds the cord is lazy," concluded Bruyere, a mechanical engineer. The duo adjusted, tested and then fine-tuned the tension of a long, thin metal coil. When they were satisfied, they reassembled the iron and tested the cord. It retracted obediently. The repair had taken well over an hour and an impressive amount of patience.

The fixers handed the iron back to Schaefer, who clutched it, delighted. "I like this place," she said. The handbell rang. ■

JUNE D. BELL is a freelance writer in the Bay Area.