

STJ Group Ships Tons of Cans for Recycling

By Amy Roberts - May 20, 2019





From left, Jim Kriner, Anthony Novelli, Shikima Jones, Jason Daoust, Cid Hamling, Michael Marsh and Doug White raise a banner to celebrate aluminum can recycling. (Photo provided by Doug White)

Island Green Living Association celebrated the transport of almost 400,000 aluminum cans from their St. John storage site, the ReSource Depot at Susannaberg, to Puerto Rico on Saturday.

"This is the culmination of our four years of crushing cans," said Doug White, IGLA co-founder. "We're finally shipping them off island to be recycled. We shipped about 15,000 pounds."

White said the project to ship the cans off island had been in the works when the hurricanes of 2017 hit. In January 2019, IGLA hired a new operations manager, Anthony Novelli, who has stepped up can collection, personally showing up at popular sites to waylay tossed-out cans that would otherwise end up in the landfill.



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The biggest obstacle for recycling the cans lay in transporting them to a recycling center, but individuals and businesses volunteered to make the project feasible.

White said IGLA originally planned to ship the cans to Atlanta, where crushed cans can be sold at 65 cents a pound, but the shipping costs were prohibitive. Instead they found a recycler in Puerto Rico who would pay 45 cents per pound.

"The real breakthrough came when we realized that the Norma H, an inter-island [marine] freight service, was making a regular monthly trip to deliver materials to St. John," said White. "They let us know when they were making their next run to St. John." The now-empty Norma H. agreed to transport the cans to Puerto Rico without charge.

Local businessman Michael Marsh then volunteered to provide two trucks to transport the cans from Susannaberg to the Norma H. IGLA board members and other community activists stepped up to lend a hand, including Steve DeBlasio, who operated the forklift.

St. John Administrator Shikima Jones posted an upbeat video on social media congratulating volunteers for their efforts.

"We're promoting keeping our beautiful island clean," she said. "We're resilient and excited. Remember, recycle, recycle, recycle!"

White said the Puerto Rico recycler pays \$900 per ton for crushed cans and then consolidates what they collect for sale off island. IGLA could recoup nearly \$7,000 from the sale, White said.

The money will be used to open new recycling services through the ReSource Depot.

"We're getting ready to buy a glass crusher, an [Andela GP Mini glass pulverizing system](#) which can process 500-1000 pounds of glass an hour," said White.

"It produces usable material right out of the machine, including silica sand and glass aggregate that has edges so soft you can walk on it barefoot," he said.

The equipment costs almost \$55,000 and is expected to take four months to arrive on island once the order has been completed.

IGLA is also investing in another machine, which will sort the material processed by the glass crusher into five different products which can be used in landscaping and construction.

"The products can be used for sidewalks, for making tiles and countertops," he said.

IGLA hopes to sell the products to fabricators building supply stores.

The money to purchase the equipment was raised by IGLA through a fundraising effort spurred by IGLA Board President Harith Wickrema. IGLA has almost raised \$100,000 to match a grant in the same amount.

The next challenge will be recycling plastics, but White said that problem has no immediate solution in sight. Recyclers pay very little for plastic, especially since China, where most of the plastic recycling takes place, has raised limits for contamination levels that they will accept.

"We have been looking for a safe solution to recycling plastic on island. It takes a tremendous volume to make a viable product. We're struggling to find a solution."

More information is [online here](#).

