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Nonprofit hopes to raise \$100K to fund plastic recycling operation

By ANDREA MILAM St. John Correspondent
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Island Green Living's Kelly McKinney, Anthony Novelli, Kat Bodish, and Kobe Liburd celebrate the launch of plastic recycling in a container-turned-recycling facility donated by Padnos Corporation and installed in Susannaberg, St. John.

Photo courtesy Island Green Living

ST. JOHN — Island Green Living is hoping to raise \$100,000 by mid-February to fund its recycling program.

The nonprofit, which kicked off its ocean-bound plastic recycling program last month, needs to raise the funds by Feb. 16 in order to fund the first 18 months of operation.

The estimated cost of running the program until it becomes financially self-sustaining is \$360,000.



Island Green has already raised \$160,000 to date, and the organization's president, Harith Wickrema, has personally pledged \$100,000 — if the nonprofit's current fundraiser can bring in the final \$100,000.

If this goal is not met, Wickrema said he will not make the donation.

Island Green has partnered with Michigan-based Padnos Corporation, which is working with automotive and technology equipment suppliers on an initiative to process 6 million pounds of ocean-bound plastics — defined as plastics that originate as waste within 30 miles of a shoreline — each year.

As part of the agreement, Padnos is providing Island Green with a baler installed in a 20-foot container retrofitted with lights and fans to act as the processing space, and two sets of multi-chamber recycling bins to be placed at the most trafficked trash disposal sites

on St. John. A plan endorsed by the V.I. Waste Management Authority, according to Island Green.



Padnos has also committed \$15,000 toward a collection truck —with an estimated cost of \$50,000 — and the recycling company will also pay for aluminum and plastics baled at Island Green’s Susannaberg facility to be shipped to the Padnos processing facility in Michigan.

Island Green will be paid market value for the materials, creating a revenue stream for the St. John nonprofit.

For Island Green’s part, the nonprofit has committed to a “massive education campaign” encouraging residents to recycle plastic waste, according to the organization, and the nonprofit will also work with restaurants to encourage them to take part in a dedicated recycling pick-up service.

At least 14 million tons of plastic end up in the ocean every year, and plastic makes up 80% of all marine debris found from surface waters to deep-sea sediments, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

“We will not have a tourism-based economy in the near future if we do not protect marine life and our oceans,” Wickrema said. “It is vital that we mitigate and ensure recyclable plastics are pulled out of the waste stream, where it would otherwise pollute our territory’s waterways and choke our landfills. Island Green is in the throes of achieving success if we are able to fund the first 15 to 18 months of operation. After that, it will be a self-sustaining business model.”

To contribute to Island Green's goal, visit www.islandgreenliving.org/donate.

Rinsed numbers 1, 2, and 5 plastics can be dropped off for recycling at Island Green Living's Susannaberg facility off Giffit Hill Road, just behind the VITEMA building.



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