

**RAVI-St. John
September, 2009 Newsletter**

August marked the one-year anniversary of the aluminum can recycling program on St. John. Back then, there was no organized community drop-off program, few volunteers, a lack of funding and only a dream. One year later, the dream has become a reality.

Thanks to help from the community and V.I. Waste Management Authority (WMA), RAVI-St. John now has a continuous and productive aluminum can recycling program. Every day, more and more people are recycling as evidenced by the amount of collections. Through a contract with WMA, collection bins are located across St. John and more and more businesses are now recycling. In total, St. John now has 46 active collection bins with more on the way.

In order to complete our ultimate mission of collecting 40% of all the aluminum cans coming in to St. John, WMA has partnered with RAVI to allow collection bins at dumpster sites and by providing a staging area where the cans are held while waiting to ship to a St. Thomas metals firm.

In November, 2008 one bin existed on St. John as a pilot project collecting only 2400 aluminum cans per month. In March, 2009, RAVI-St. John was collecting 24,000 aluminum cans per month. In August, that figure has risen to over 28,000 and growing steadily. By the end of 2009, we expect an average of 30,000 cans per month. Based on our assessment of 2 million cans per year entering St. John, we expect to be conservatively collecting 500,000 cans per year or 25% of all cans entering St. John. That's almost 8.5 tons of cans that will not reach our landfills. As more businesses recycle, the tonnage will increase dramatically. In our first year we have already met over half of our 40% goal.

Aluminum can recycling has become a true community effort. The program could not have been possible without the generous donations of time and equipment from residents of St. John. Volunteers "adopt" bins by emptying contents daily and drive to our collection container. Volunteers build and maintain bins. Storage on Site, a local container provider generously donated our central collection containers. And WMA has come through again with funding for bins and additional programs.

Starting soon, RAVI, in another partnership with WMA, will be initiating an educational program aimed at making residents of every age aware of the importance of recycling. Street signs will be erected to remind residents that St. John recycles and that littering harms our environment. The WMA funding will increase our collection productivity. Our goal is to increase our volunteerism and increase business participation. Awareness is the key to keeping St. John beautiful.

It is hoped that RAVI can partner with other businesses to make other recycling efforts possible like glass, compost and cardboard. We need recycling legislation so that recycling in the Virgin Islands will become a way of life. Our islands environments are too fragile to not consider a comprehensive recycling program.

St. John has shown that with a concerted effort, recycling does work to the betterment of all.