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Address  
P.O. Box 2098  
6802 CB Arnhem  
The Netherlands

Delivery Address   
Vlamoven 34  
6826 TN Arnhem  
The Netherlands

*new  
delivery  
address*

Phone +31 26 3120 994  
Fax +31 26 3120 630  
E: info@recyclinginternational.com  
W: www.recyclinginternational.com

Publisher & Editor  
Manfred Beck  
manfred@recyclinginternational.com

Deputy Editor  
Gert-Jan van der Have  
gertjan@recyclinginternational.com

Magazine Administrator  
Helga Fresen  
helga@recyclinginternational.com

Editorial consultant  
Ian Martin  
ian@recyclinginternational.com

Contributing editor/Consultant technology  
Prof. Ir. Wijnand Dalmijn, Technical  
University of Delft, The Netherlands

Contributing to this issue  
Helga Fresen, Giampiero Magnaghi,  
Ian Martin, Allard Verburg,  
Voermans van Bree Photographers

Art Direction  
Inpladi Lay Out Studio

Printing Company  
vanGrinsven drukkers Venlo bv

Advertising Sales  
Jan Willem Ypma  
Phone: +31 343 517 488  
Fax: +31 343 510 253  
E: jw@recyclinginternational.com

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# Bra-cycling

To my surprise, I have discovered that there is a US-based organisation dedicated to the recycling of bras. And if you'll forgive the pun, its activities are certainly worthy of support...



One evening, when my wife Helga was out with some friends, I poured myself a whisky and started an Internet search for unusual stories with a recycling theme. There were not that many, but I stubbornly persisted with my Googling activities and ultimately stumbled upon a website which caught my attention because it mentioned a commodity to which our magazine rarely refers. We are all familiar with the recycling of ferrous and non-ferrous metals, as well as paper, textiles, tyres, e-scrap and end-of-life vehicles, ships and airplanes; but did you know there is a bra recycling business out there? The town of Gilbert in Arizona is home to an organisation called 'The Bra Recyclers' whose motto is 'The new shape of recycling' and whose activities are marketed through its Bosom Buddy Recycling programme. The Bra Recyclers is a for-profit organisation which offers an environmentally friendly and cheap way to donate bras to breast cancer survivors and women in transitional shelters. 'Our concept is simple: Used Bras = Using Simple Encouragements to Develop, Blossom and Renew positive Attitudes and Self-esteem,' it states. Foundation garments are not normally regarded as esteem-boosters. 'But ask any woman and they will tell you that a well-fitted bra gives you the confi-

demand for special-needs, post-breast surgery and maternity bras. The Bra Recyclers has drop-off points in 12 US states but women (and also men) can just as easily mail the old or new bras sitting in their lingerie drawers so that they can be 'worn by a deserving woman in your community'. The website urges interested parties to follow four easy steps: 'Wash it (All bras should be washed); Tag it (Fill out the Bra Recycling Form); Box it (Place your bras in a box or large envelope); and Drop it off to the mail.' The Bra Recyclers buys and sells recycled bras, which are re-distributed through exporters and organisations to developing countries around the world. The aforementioned network of Bra Recycling Ambassadors assists the organisation in providing deserving women with used or unused bras. 'As a Bra Recycling Ambassador,' it is explained, 'you will have the opportunity to: directly impact the lives of women in your area by providing them with bras; host community events in your area to raise awareness about the lack of a simple lingerie staple that affects the self-esteem of women and girls nationally and globally; gain the personal satisfaction of giving back to deserving women and girls in our community; have access to our Ambassador kit, which has been specially designed to help guide you through the bra drive process.'

This left me wondering whether women alone are encouraged to organise bra drives or whether male Ambassadors are also welcome.

## 'Help reshape Haiti! Recycle your bras!'

dence to go anywhere and do anything you want to do,' the organisation says on its website (www.brarecycling.com). 'Our bras are distributed around the world through exporters, organisations and Bra Recycling Ambassadors to deserving women and girls in transition back to self-sufficiency.' Since its inception in 2008, the company has donated more than 100 000 bras to support 23 organisations across the country and abroad. It goes without saying that not all bras can be accepted; they need to be in good condition, and clasps and straps need to be functional. And there is particularly strong

Last year, The Bra Recyclers struck up a partnership with Angel Wings International to send bras to women in earthquake-riven Haiti with the motto: 'Help reshape Haiti! Recycle your bras!' Its goal was to send 1000 bras to Haiti in January but the collection effort will continue until February 28. So our readers (male or female, since we don't discriminate) can still send their bras to: The Bra Recyclers, 3317 S. Higley Rd, Ste 114-441, Gilbert, AZ 85297, USA. For such a good cause, surely the person donating the most bras should be awarded a cup - or, more appropriately, two. □

Manfred Beck  
Editor