

According to the EPA Office of solid waste, Americans threw away 9 million tons of reusable clothes, footwear, towels and bedding in 2005. Those clothes ended up in landfills. Clothing can be recycled no matter what condition it's in, as long it is clean and dry. Nothing will be wasted.

One option is to donate to a nonprofit thrift store. They usually select the best items to sell to the public and the remaining items may be sold to "graders". The graders send those in the worst condition to the textile recyclers to make rags, paper fibers or stuffing for furniture and insulation. Higher quality items are often sold in developing countries to people who can't afford new clothing. Nonprofits without a thrift shop may sell directly to graders or to for-profit thrift shops. Savers, a chain of for-profit thrift stores in the U.S., Canada and Australia, last year collected nearly 600 million pounds of clothes. These stores again sell the best goods and resell the rest.

Although nonprofits traditionally use the money raised for good causes, community-rights activists are currently debating the economic impact of used goods on developing markets. The concern is the influx of recycled goods may undercut indigenous clothing manufacturers because of their cheaper cost. South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Indonesia and the Philippines have banned clothing imports to protect local merchants. The for-profit thrift stores reply they are providing jobs and pay duties and import tariffs to those countries.

If you choose not to donate, sell or trade items on websites like www.ebay.com, or www.freecycle.org.

Area organizations and businesses who take donations:

Second Helpings - 108 Fox St. 646-5812, Run by HELP of Ojai takes used clothing, shoes, blankets, etc. They sell some, and distribute some to the homeless and the needy through their C.A.P. program. Un-saleable items are sent to the Salvation Army in Carpenteria who sorts and sells to recyclers.

St. Thomas Aquinas Thrift Store 334 E. Ojai Ave 646-9256 takes used clothing, shoes, blankets, etc. Un-saleable items are also sent to the Salvation Army in Carpenteria.

Soles4Souls (www.soles4souls.org) accepts all types of shoes and outfits the underprivileged with shoes that fit their locale and climate. If they get donations that can't be re-worn, they give them to other agencies that grind up the fabric parts for use in clothing and convert the rubber to playground surfaces.

Dress For Success (www.dressforsuccess.org) accepts business suits and work attire for women in need of job training. They never sell overstock to graders or textile recyclers, the excess supply or in appropriate attire is sold at invitation-only sales for former clients.

Gold Coast Recycling Center (www.goldcoastrecycling.com) 5275 Colt St., Ventura takes only tennis shoes for the Nike, Reuse-A-Shoe program (www.letmeplay.com/reuseashoe/locations). They take any brand of used athletic shoe but only shoes containing no metal, No cleats, and no wet or damp shoes. The Nike program then collects and ships to their processing facilities to be ground up into a material called **Nike Grind**. The Nike Grind is used to make different parts of sport surfaces in communities around the world.

For more green information online visit: www.thegreenguide.com/doc/123/donatedclothes