



University Benefits the Environment and the Oral Cancer Foundation

Re-Cell-a-Thon Raises Funds by Recycling Cellphones

At one of America's most scenic and historic universities, a conscientious and industrious group of students, faculty and administrators recently formed a Greening Committee dedicated to raising awareness of the many things that can and must be done to protect the environment. So where is this university located: Vermont? Colorado? Oregon? Not quite; actually, the location is New York City.

The Greening Committee is a collaborative effort between New York University's College of Dentistry and College of Nursing. Formed in the fall of 2007, the roughly 20 committee members decided that they would show their support for Earth Day 2009 by organizing a 4-week-long Re-Cell-a-Thon to recycle cell phones. Not only that, they decided that the funds raised would be donated to the Oral Cancer Foundation. According to Theresa Rinaldi, who chaired the Re-Cell-a-Thon's Public Relations sub-committee, "We knew that NYU has a wonderful relationship with Brian Hill and the Oral Cancer Foundation, and we couldn't think of a better organization to donate our proceeds to." According to Ms. Rinaldi, who is Alumni Outreach Administrator at the College of Dentistry, over 170 phones were collected at seven locations within the two colleges.

The Greening Committee partnered with CollectiveGood, a non-profit organization that recycles donated cellphones and PDAs back into reuse. According to CollectiveGood, there are more than 1 billion used mobile phones in the US sitting on shelves or in landfills, and another 125 million will be added to the shelves or landfills this year alone. The devices collected by the organization are usually provided to developing countries, where they offer affordable communications to families who are often receiving their first piece of modern communications equipment.

In addition to Ms. Rinaldi, the other Greening Committee members who organized the Re-Cell-a-Thon are: Michael O'Connor, Executive Dean of Finance and Administration at the College of Dentistry; Annette Cutugno, Director of Facilities Management for the College of Dentistry; Susan Abraham, Director of Administration at the College of Dentistry; Alexis Cohen, a second-year student in the College of Dentistry; Lance Irving, Director of Administration at the College of Nursing; and Lawayne Perkins, Clinic Manager at the College of Dentistry, whom Ms. Rinaldi described as an outstanding collaborator who had a particularly strong influence on the success of the drive.

Several members of the Greening Committee also participated in the College of Dentistry's 4th Annual Oral Cancer Walk on April 18, which was the day after the Re-Cell-a-Thon officially ended. However, the interest generated within the University was so great that the recycling period was extended an extra week. Many of the cellphone donors were patients, students, staff and faculty who saw ads for the event on TV monitors in the elevators in the University's clinics.

The Greening Committee has not finalized its plans for next year, but there is no question that the relationship between NYU and the Oral Cancer Foundation will continue to be a strong one. "NYU has really embraced the Oral Cancer Foundation," said Ms. Rinaldi, "and our Committee looks forward to doing everything we can to continue to support the great work done by Brian Hill and his organization."