

Research provides evidence showing bottled water can be unhealthy for people, environment

BY ANNA EUSIBIO

Student

Greensboro's prolonged drought provided strong material for the media in 2007, yet another issue deserving attention remains a concern even after the dry spell has ended. Resource specialists have targeted bottled water as a possible, yet unlikely, source of harm to the environment. Although consumers consider bottled water a seemingly harmless household item, the environmental and financial effects caused by the production and shipping of bottled water are significant.

According to the "New York Times," the United States imported 44 million gallons of water just last year. Such transportation does not come without a price; manufacturing and transporting a bottle of water across the U.S. creates almost one quarter of a pound of carbon dioxide. While this amount may not sound like much, the carbon dioxide created is equal to the carbon dioxide emitted when a car runs for 30 minutes. Natural Resources Defense Council research also shows that the combined tons of carbon dioxide released from the transportation of bottled water for both the European Union and Fiji was the same as running 690 cars continuously for one year. These numbers do not include the pounds of carbon emitted as bottled water ships across the U.S. to its final destinations.

Bottled water not only contributes to the nation's growing carbon footprint, but also to its overflowing landfills. A plastic bottle's journey does not end when someone tosses it in a trash can.

Plastic bottles are made from polyethylene terephthalate, a polyester chemical compound known as PET. While PET acts as a formidable plastic material because it is transparent, durable, malleable and resistant to damage from moisture, many consumers do not realize it can never completely break down because of its chemical composition. Therefore, if a water bottle is not recycled and ends up in a landfill, it will remain there.

Consumers assume they are helping to alleviate the local drought by purchasing bottled water instead of using tap water, but many are unaware that when they buy one liter of bottled water, they are, in effect, buying six. According to Simran Sethi, an eco-advocate for the Sundance Channel's series "Big Ideas for a Small Planet," the manufacturing process for the bottled drink requires approximately five liters of water to cool the plastic in one bottle, in addition to the one liter used to fill the drinking container.

Choosing bottled water over tap water cannot only harm the environment, but the price also dents one's wallet. In a comparison of bottled water and tap water, data from the Greensboro Water Department determines the following: City water costs \$0.0022 per gallon per day, so the annual cost of drinking water is only 80 cents if one drinks one gallon of water per day. On the contrary, bottled water costs approximately \$2.56 per gallon, so if one consumes one gallon of bottled water per day, he or she will pay \$934.40 over the course of one year, or almost 1168 times the cost of Greensboro tap water.



Another misconception for many consumers involves water purity. They assume bottled water is cleaner and safer than the water that flows from their taps; however, many bottled waters actually are filled with purified city tap water, which disproves the theory. Residents of Greensboro are fortunate to have

quality water available. Information from the Greensboro Water Department shows the city's water quality ranks third out of the 99 major municipalities in North Carolina. Greensboro's tap water is an inexpensive and eco-friendly resource that should be "tapped into" more often.



Hyman photo



Pace photo

December's Stuffed Animal Drive of 2007 proved to be a great success for the fourth consecutive year because of Student Council's leadership and the student body's willingness to make donations. Accompanied by Annie Mack, Mary Nash, Stephanie Pittman, Michael Timmons, Mary Margaret Tourtellot, and Rebecca Webster, Student Body President Sam Hyman, transported the numerous cuddly gifts for every student to Hunter Elementary School on Wednesday, Dec. 19. Attending a Title I school, some of these children might otherwise not have received Christmas presents. Hunter Elementary School students showed their appreciation by sending Grimsley the thank-you banner hanging in the front lobby.



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