

Zero Heroes: Mary and Alan Gagnon

We are excited to present this season's Zero Heroes: Mary and Alan Gagnon. The Gagnons have been in the re-use industry for many years, owning and operating Gagnon's Videos and More. The key part of the Gagnons' business name is "and more." They rent DVDs, of course, but they also host a weekly "People's Think Tank" where community members gather to discuss important issues of the day. They provide a buffing service for scratched CDs and DVDs, keeping those items in use longer, and keeping them out of the trash.

The Gagnons also provide a library of free educational DVDs about environmental issues, energy, permaculture, and much more.

"A lot of those videos are free; people can check them out without having to spend money to get educated. That has been cool in terms of getting dialogue started," Mary said.

Mary explained that part of their buying process is designed to bring a wide variety of titles to the community, rather than mimicking the chain DVD rental stores, and providing "a whole wall" of one title, then throwing out dozens that end up not getting used.

"The idea of it essentially is that we're the town's DVD library," she said. "

The Gagnons re-use and recycle as a matter of course; at first they simply shredded and recycled all their invoices and customer agreements, but when their shredders kept breaking from over-use, they chose to eliminate printed agreements, rather than keep going through paper, ink, and shredders.

"We decided to stop printing invoices unless requested. The cost of paper, ink, time, and shredding was ridiculous," Mary said, adding that they also don't buy toner cartridges; they refill and recycle them. And rather than buying plastic bags for the rented DVDS, they put out the word that they would take plastic grocery bags off customers' hands. Now they reuse bags, often several times over.

Mary and Alan are so committed to re-use, that Mary explained how they even re-use road salt that gets tracked into the store during the winter. She sweep's it off the store rug, saves it, and spreads it out on the store's stoop when it's icy out.

"I believe in use it up," said Mary.

Now that's the word of a Zero Hero!