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Mayor Healy to Kick-Off the Waste Free JC Plastic Bag Campaign to Reuse, Reduce, and Recycle

JERSEY CITY – today, May 23, 2012, Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy will kick-off ***Waste Free JC*** – an education campaign that promotes the reuse, reduction, and recycling of plastic bags, at a **10:30a.m.** press conference at **Alexander D. Sullivan No. 30 Elementary School**, located at **171 Seaview Avenue** between Old Bergen Rd. and Kennedy Blvd.

In late 2010, a ban on plastic bags was proposed but residents and local business owners expressed concern over implementation and the effects it would have during a down economy. To achieve the same goal – a reduction of plastic bags in city streets – City officials have met with industry representatives to launch an aggressive education campaign. Representatives from the New Jersey Food Council, the Chemistry Council and local supermarkets and retailers have been working with the City to develop a plan to better promote and raise awareness about reusable shopping bags and the recycling of plastic bags and plastic wraps.

The ***Waste Free JC*** plastic bag campaign is part of **Mayor Healy's *365 Days of Green: Making Jersey City Greener*** initiative which encourages residents and local businesses to adopt ways of sustainable living.

"Plastic bags, or 'urban tumbleweed' as a former colleague referred to them, are a blight on our cities, suburbs, and rural areas," said **Mayor Healy**. "Not only do they kill thousands of marine mammals and wildlife each year, but they pollute our parks, roadways and neighborhoods. I encourage the use of reusable bags by consumers and retailers, and to reduce the consumption of single-use bags in our community. It is one simple change that we can all do to make a difference."

The City will be partnering with large retailers and local merchants, who will collect plastic bags for recycling. Participating businesses, such **as A&P and Extra Supermarket**, will display a ***Waste Free JC*** sticker in the window so residents know they can return plastics to that location.

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As part of the ***Waste Free JC***, an educational component has been added for children and adults alike. Bag the Habit, a local small business and reusable bag company, and the Jersey City Incinerator Authority have partnered with the City in this campaign. The **Jersey City Incinerator Authority** has donated paintable bags and painting supplies for the third grade students of PS#30 to use and Bag the Habit has spearheaded, **"We Create the Future,"** an art and educational project for them which will have the students paint the canvas bags.

According to the EPA, about 300 billion plastic bags are used in the United States annually. Of that, only about three percent of plastic bags are recycled.

An average family of four, in the United States, uses 1,400 plastic bags a year. Less than one percent of all plastic bags are recycled. It takes 1,000 years for a plastic bag to break down in American landfills, which means tons of pollution and windblown litter is created.

Communities across the country are supporting efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle plastic bags as the tried-and-true approach to responsible handling. These simple, common-sense steps can help reduce waste, prevent litter and keep our environment clean.

"The next time you head to your local grocer or retailer, remember to return those shopping bags, dry-cleaning bags, bread bags to recycling drop off centers or retailers and municipalities that provide designated recycling bins," said **Mayor Healy**. "If you forget your reusable bag, opt for paper bags instead. Unlike plastic, paper bags are biodegradable and safe for our environment. And if you have a few plastic bags around the house, ***don't toss them in the trash!*** Most grocery chains accept plastic bags for recycling, even if the bags aren't from their store."

Plastic bags are recycled into many different products. Most plastic bags are recycled into composite lumber but can also be reprocessed into small pellets, or post consumer resin, which can become feed stock for a variety of products such as new bags, pallets, containers, crates and pipes.

"So, remember: ***Reduce, Reuse, Recycle*** because it's our environment, our planet and our choice," continued **Mayor Healy**.

All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy at 201-547-4836 or 201-376-0699.//////