



"Reduce – Reuse – Recycle"

Mandy Brooks
Recycling Coordinator
Salinas Valley Recycles

Voting with Our Wallets

With the general election just a few weeks away, you may be as burned out on political rhetoric as I am. Fear not; this is not about endorsing a politician, pushing any measure or agenda, but about inspiring and encouraging you to influence change every day of your life. Particularly, this is about voting with our purchasing power.

We constantly make decisions about where to shop, what to buy, what to eat, and so on. Believe it or not, these decisions have far-reaching impacts, and make a big difference close to home. Granted, there are things for which we have limited choices, and situations that limit our options, but there are also plenty of opportunities to flex purchasing muscles to support our ideals. Take Halloween, for example!

It might not be worth breaking your child's heart (or enduring a public meltdown) to deny them the latest licensed character costume produced overseas and sold at a big box store with copious packaging, but it might be worth offering them some better options. "Better" is relative to your own values, but could mean creating less waste, buying locally-made or American-made, buying recycled, reusing, supporting locally-owned or charitable businesses, saving money, finding creative solutions (thinking out of the box), etc. while teaching those values to your young ones by example.

Before caving to the big-box solution, you might consider: Is there a locally made option? Could the costume be recreated, perhaps using items from a reuse store or your closet? Is it available gently used at a thrift store or neighborhood costume swap? Could you buy just one thing that makes it new and appealing? Could you rent a higher quality version for a similar cost?

Questions like this can be applied to many other purchases, too. Choosing a product made from recycled materials, checking the local reuse store for a viable option, shopping at the farmer's market and locally-owned stores, choosing locally-produced options, buying durable products that can be reused, making something from scratch vs. buying pre-made, or having an item repaired rather than buying new can help support the local economy and the local environment. It could even help change the world!

Now more than ever, your vote counts. Vote this November, and vote your values with every purchase you make.

