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Families talking trash

Regional News

Nov 21, 2007 07:32 PM

Garbage lessons not lost on viewers

By: Jessica Young

Keep three months' worth of garbage in your garage. Instead of throwing trash to the curb, pile all that waste and watch it sit and rot.

Sounds like a crazy idea, but the McDonald family of Toronto did just that as the subjects of a new environmental documentary called Garbage! The Revolution Starts At Home, by Toronto filmmaker Andrew Niskier.

What they learned is that the family household has become one of the most ferocious environmental predators of our time.

The Benedict family, who reside in Thornhill, had a screening of the film Monday at their home.

It was a new approach to seeing an environmental film with the hope of learning and sharing ideas. Instead of going to a theatre, Mr. Niskier decided to take a different approach and have people purchase and screen the show themselves.

"In the old days, films used to come to towns as an event, like travelling road shows. We want people to hold their own event, screen the film and talk about exploring this issue," Mr. Niskier said.

With few chairs, most of their friends, family and neighbours sat on the basement floor to watch the movie on the family's projector.



The Benedict family of Thornhill and their friends gather for a screening Monday of Garbage! The Revolution Starts At Home, by Toronto filmmaker Andrew Niskier. They gather around a sign that often appears on Toronto's beaches when Lake Ontario becomes polluted by our actions, even here in York Region. The movie, which depicts what happens to our waste, shocked many viewers.

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"We have a small home but it went really well, everyone liked the movie," Janet Benedict said.

The film explores the journey of the piling trash in the McDonald family garage as well as its transport to Michigan dumps, where Toronto garbage is disposed of.

How the McDonalds dealt with waste and what they discover along the way shocked many viewers at the Benedict screening, who were surprised by the amount of waste a household produces.

The Benedict and McDonald families know each other well. The local residents jumped at the chance to help out their featured friends. "They told us about the movie so we said hey, we'll do a screening party for you," Ms Benedict said.

By logging onto the movie's website, you can register a screening and send out invitations. Movie hosts can also download a question-and-answer sheet to spark conversation after the movie, as well as receive a poster and a flyer to promote the film, Mr. Nisker said. "It's like a 'become your own distributor kit'. All I ask is that you buy the film to help support, spread the word," he said.

The interactive environment of the screening sparked the interest of Denise Oliver, one of the Benedicts' neighbours who attended.

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