

Friendly competition should lead to less waste, more diversion

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How you view the great Clarington-Whitby pitch-in week competition of 2008 depends entirely on your perspective.

The two south Durham municipalities had a friendly challenge to see who could pick up more garbage during the week of April 21 to 27.

The results are in and the winner is . . . Clarington. Well, sort of, anyway.

See, Clarington collected a whopping 13.83 metric tonnes of trash during that spring week. For Whitby, the total was a mere 4.72 metric tonnes.

But some would argue the point of the exercise, given our collective aim to create less trash and send more refuse to compost and recycling, is to lose this competition.

To be fair, the point of the debris showdown was to raise awareness about green bin and blue box use. Clarington is working hard to try to improve its waste diversion rate and drawing attention to the constant problem of where to put our garbage is always useful.

For Clarington Mayor Jim Abernethy, the results were somewhat disturbing.

"That's a surprising number," he said when informed of his municipality's total. "It tells us that people continue to throw garbage into the environment and disregard nature."

The message from this outcome for Clarington is to push harder with public education to get people on board.

For Whitby Mayor Pat Perkins, the results confirmed her town has a "grand recycling program."

She was happy to lose this challenge but, like Councillor Gerry Emm said, friendly competition was worth it to promote healthier and better communities.

Perhaps the key is the way garbage is collected in Whitby and Clarington. In Whitby, blue box and green bin collection takes place weekly, garbage collection every other week. The process is reversed in Clarington but beginning next April, the municipality will follow Whitby's lead. More frequent blue bin and green box collection should lead to more recycling and less trash.

Let's hope the exercise was useful for both municipalities and helps them get to the goal of 70 per cent waste diversion by 2010.