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**Muncie Sanitary Makes Strides Towards Zero-Waste IRONMAN**

The Muncie IRONMAN 70.3 is a much-anticipated event, drawing thousands of athletes and spectators every year to experience an incredible feat of endurance. Behind the scenes, the race is a massive production, requiring hundreds of volunteers, coordination with police and emergency services from multiple townships, and unique partnerships.

One such partnership was with the Muncie Sanitary District (MSD), East Central Recycling, Muncie-Delaware Clean and Beautiful, and the Parks Department (especially Prairie Creek staff). As part of the race, athletes are given Gatorade, water bottles, energy bars, and other support items to fuel them through the day. Unfortunately, this can generate a lot of trash.

MSD Recycling Educator Jason Donati estimated that the 2021 race produced 15 tons of landfill waste. “We did a waste audit last year after the full IRONMAN event had ended,” commented Donati. “We realized that if we made some specific changes to how we collected the waste, we could plan ahead, use our resources, and keep all of this material out a landfill."

For this year’s Ironman, MSD brought recycling bins instead of dumpsters, and placed them at every aid station and around the park. Recyclables were taken to East Central Recycling, who will sort, bale, and sell the material. Prairie Creek Reservoir staff collected wooden pallets to reuse at the reservoir. Clothing, reusable water bottles, and other items dropped by athletes will be held by IRONMAN group for a few months in lost and found, and then donated to local Muncie charities. Unused athletic items, such as Gatorade and energy bars, will go to local schools, athletic groups, public safety agencies and other local area organizations.

In total, workers collected 1.3 tons of recyclables, and .85 tons of trash. Instead of all 2+ tons of material going into a landfill, the recyclables will be baled and sold, and the trash will be transported to a waste-to-energy center in Indianapolis, incinerated, and converted to energy. MSD will be covering the incineration fees, and East Central Recycling is waiving the usual recyclables tipping fee.

“This is a huge step forward towards a zero-waste IRONMAN, and I am so proud of MSD and our Prairie Creek team for orchestrating this partnership,” commented Mayor Ridenour. No materials from the October 1st race will end up in a landfill.