

Mr. Ramsey

I would like to bring to your attention this article published in the Gate County Leader newspaper, out of Grantsburg, Wisc. My hopes are that you would publish it and make our Community aware of the deception these "Red Boxes" placed in our Community are projecting.

They, in fact, are a profit making business. They sell the donations in the boxes to third world countries.

Let's send USAgain "packing" and keep our donations in our own Community. We know they will help people caught in the economic crunch - and the disabled.

Please consider doing what you can to get these boxes out of our Community. We can donate to local Churches and other Charitable organizations.

Thank You

Jon Marie
15333 Barium N.W.
Ramsey Mn
55383

763-421-8415

Follow
the Leader

INTER-COUNTY
Leader

Giving to the needy? Not at all, says USAgain

Company fills a need, says
spokesperson, by
recycling and reselling
clothes that would
otherwise end up in a landfill

by Gary King
leader editor

FREDERIC - Some would-be donors have been stymied by the large red clothing collection boxes that appeared this past year in the village.

There's one at a convenience store on Hwy. 35 and another at the grocery store on Main Street.

A sign on the boxes says, "Let your used clothing get a second life and be reused - that makes good sense!"

Another says, "We are a commercial company doing something good for the environment."

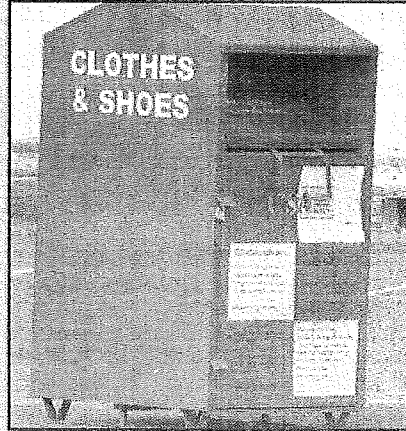
Yet another claims, "We cooperate with schools, nonprofits, city recycling programs and local businesses to bring this recycling option to your community."

So where do the clothes and shoes placed in the boxes end up?

Not here. And likely not in the United States.

In fact, the USAgain (pronounced 'use again') company is not a charity but a clothing-recycling business that sells the bulk of these donated items

See Donation boxes, page 3



USAgain donation boxes showed up this past year in Frederic, puzzling some would-be donors who have wondered where their donations end up. -

Photo by Gary King

cooperative-owned newspaper • 5

Donation boxes/ from page 1

to Third World countries such as Bulgaria and Nicaragua where few can afford to buy clothes and the market for secondhand clothing is huge.

USAgain has 9,000 such boxes in 16 states and collects millions of pounds of clothing for resale and recycling every year.

And why should someone donate to the boxes so a company can resell it to make money?

"To keep clothing out of landfills," said Margaret Sullivan, a USAgain spokesperson. "And in the end most clothing doesn't go to a good cause, it ends up in

the trash. We're helping out the environment and recognizing a business opportunity."

She said USAgain, based in Elgin, Ill., has never presented itself as a charity.

What about the sign stating they cooperate with schools and local businesses?

"We have a program where schools can request to have a bin on their property and we give them a percentage of the clothing sold," Sullivan said.

Such an agreement does not exist with a local school at this time.

According to some news reports, some towns have sent USAgain packing.

"This wasn't about goodwill for the community," says Frank Bergman, mayor of Cahokia, Ill. "This was about making money."

At least one Frederic woman agrees with that sentiment.

"I believe these bins are hurting our local economy," she said in a letter to the Leader. "I believe we need to get them out of here."

The woman said people should donate their old clothing

to a local thrift store instead.

"While so many businesses are struggling, let's not just give away what little we have to a giant like this," she wrote.

USAgain spokesperson Margaret Sullivan agreed that people wanting to give clothing to help the local community should not put their donations in the USAgain boxes.

"If you're doing that, give it to your church," she said.