



Help the Environment; Win an Ugly Mug

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Each morning at work you fill a Styrofoam cup with delicious, steaming coffee.

Mmmmmm, coffee...

Does this sound like you? If so, you are not alone. Throughout Seton, thousands of disposable, white styrene cups are used each day.

A typical large Seton facility typically goes through around **25,000 cups a month**. If you laid those cups end-to-end, the resulting line would stretch from UMCB to the front of Dell Children's. Multiply this by the number of Seton hospitals and clinics and you get a number that is truly staggering.

In celebration of Earth Day 2015, Seton is encouraging associates to kick the styrene cup habit by bringing a ceramic coffee mug to work and using it instead of disposable cups. Do your part and help your whole department or work team to kick the styrene habit!

Want to win an official, brand new, super cool Seton UGLY MUG?



To encourage good-for-the-environment behavior, you can win an official Seton Ugly Mug! It's easy.

1. Take a picture of you with your ugly mug at the office, OR snap a photo of you recycling at the office or doing a green activity in honor of Earth Day.
2. Send in the picture with your name, site and the best way to contact you.
3. The first 125 associates to enter their pictures will receive a special Seton UGLY MUG!
4. The UGLIEST Seton mug presented, as chosen by a panel of tasteless judges, will receive a ridiculous, special Mystery prize!

To give you an example of ugly mugs, here are some of the ones sent to us in an earlier contest:



How much do you know?

Aside from the costs involved, styrene poses dangers to the environment and to humans. Seton is aware of the negative aspects surrounding styrene and is investigating environmentally friendly alternatives throughout the Seton family. As these changes are being implemented, a good base of knowledge about styrene is useful.

Styrofoam™ is a trademarked brand name belonging to Dow Chemical. It has come to be associated with any styrene or polystyrene product. Styrene is a petroleum-based plastic. It is created through a chemical reaction process using heat followed by rapid cooling.

As a result, when polystyrene is heated in a microwave, it breaks down, allowing chemicals within the material to seep into foods and liquids that are then consumed.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer classify styrene as a potential human carcinogen. Ingesting styrene has also been linked to depression, nerve damage and reproductive disorders.

In addition to the potential health risks posed, Styrofoam™ is an environmental hazard. Producing this material releases numerous harmful pollutants and byproducts that are known to impact the ozone layer. Additionally, Styrofoam™ products are difficult to recycle and require special equipment that most recycling facilities do not have.

One of the other major problems is that styrene takes an extremely long time to decompose. To put this into perspective, **if St. Vincent de Paul had thrown away a styrene cup nearly 400 years ago, it would still be largely intact in a land fill today.**

What's happening at the Ascension Health level?

Ascension Health has taken action system-wide to eliminate polystyrene foam products in food service at Ascension Health hospitals.

The Environmental Stewardship team is collaborating with The Resource Group and TouchPoint on a strategy to eliminate the use of polystyrene foam products in food service at Ascension Health hospitals. **Saint Thomas West** in Nashville, TN; **St. Vincent's HealthCare** in Jacksonville, FL; and **Seton's Dell Children's Medical Center** have eliminated most polystyrene — except cups for hot soup and hot drinks. Many hospitals have also stopped using polystyrene clamshell boxes, or charge extra for their use. Instead, they provide plates with plastic wrap for carryout items, or paper containers.

In addition, The Resource Group is working to evaluate PeopleSoft and Staples lists to remove polystyrene products that are purchased for break rooms and other non-cafeteria purposes.

Ascension and TouchPoint will use membership in Practice Greenhealth as a vehicle to align with healthcare, higher education, sports organizations and corporations to leverage purchasing power, encourage product innovation and bring down costs in this area.

What can you do?

- Avoid styrene/Styrofoam™ cups and containers when possible by using glass or ceramic drinking containers, bowls, cups and plates
- Never microwave liquids or food in styrene containers; transfer them to ceramic or glass containers before heating
- Buy beverage products packaged in glass, as glass is non-toxic and fully recyclable
- Follow these [tips for greening your life](#) at work and home
- Share and post [educational materials](#) about recycling in your hospital
- Learn more about [Seton's Environmental Stewardship](#)