

A Quarterly Newsletter of



Lake County Solid Waste Management District

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Winter 2010



The Bella Webb Award for Environmental Education

Last fall, the Lake County Solid Waste Management District announced its call for nominations for the 2009-2010 Bella Webb Award for Environmental Education. The District received several nominations from peer teachers, principals, and schools from all over Lake County. These nominations described how each nominee's environmental efforts in and outside of the classroom has had a positive impact on their school and the community. The winner will be honored at the District's annual Teacher Appreciation/Earth Day Dinner, which will be held the evening of April 22, 2010. Thank you for your submissions. We encourage you to keep up the GREEN efforts!

This award was named after the late Bella Webb, who was a dedicated teacher



at Elliot Elementary School in Munster, Indiana. Bella Webb was not only a major advocate for the environment, but she

was also one of the first supporters of the District's environmental education programs and was truly "green."



The Lake County Solid Waste Management District would like to

thank Lakeshore Public Television for sponsoring the production services for the documentary film of the 2009-2010 Bella Webb Award for Environmental Education.



Lake County Solid Waste Management District

EnviroHolidays!

In early December, the Enviromobile Educators covered parts of Peifer Elementary School in Schererville with



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garbage—REUSED and RECYCLED garbage, that is! Principal Doug DeLaughter invited Lake County Solid Waste Management District to participate in some GREEN decorating at the school this holiday season. From Styrofoam-peanut garland to bottle-cap ornaments, these ideas for adornment are earth-friendly and economical!

Americans produce more garbage during the Christmas season than at any other time of the year, so don't lose your green attitude when things get busy! Don't forget that the Enviromobile Educators will make reused and recycled holiday craft projects with YOUR students. The EnviroHolidays program is offered exclusively in December each year, but reused and recycled crafts are a great idea year-round. Visit www.lcswmd.com for tips on making every season green!

Lake County's own G.S.I. team

This fall, the Lake County Solid Waste Management District turned America Recycles Day into America Recycles Season! In support of Lake Central School Corporation's quest to GO GREEN, the Enviromobile Educators turned students into



Garbage Scene Investigators! In celebration of America Recycles Day, nearly

500 Lake Central School Corporation elementary and middle school students investigated garbage problems at home, at

school, and in the community as part of the G.S.I. Project. Students created science fair-style project boards and presented them for judging at their schools. Each participating classroom then entered three finalists into Lake County Solid Waste Management District's Fourth Annual 3Rs Fair on December 16 at Peifer Elementary School. All participants received Ecospun T-shirts made from recycled #1 plastic and sporting the phrase, "Green Is Groovy."

Finalists and their families were honored at an evening award ceremony after the final judging took place. Grand-prize winners took home "hand chairs" (like the one pictured) made from recycled #2 plastic.

Thank you, teachers and principals! Thank you, Peifer Elementary! Thank you, garbage INVESTIGATORS!

All I want for Christmas!

Second graders at Jane Ball Elementary in Cedar Lake and John Wood Elementary in Merrillville wished for FISH this holiday season! Students in Bea Cak and George Grogloth's classes are raising Rainbow Trout fish again this year as part of Lake County Solid Waste Management District's Trout in the Classroom program. The delicate eggs were delivered to the schools in November and, by Christmas, they had hatched! These classes receive monthly visits from Lake County Solid Waste Educator Angela Petyko, who set up the aquarium and delivered the eggs but counts on students to monitor the aquarium environment and raise healthy fish.

During the Trout in the Classroom program, activities focus on clean water, healthy habitats, life cycles, and fish anatomy. Once the young fish reach

"fingerling" size in May, they will be transported to live out their years in the indoor Trout Stream at the Environmental



Education Center in Hammond.

For more information, visit www.troutintheclassroom.org or contact Angela at apetyko@lcswmd.com.

Reuse this bag!

Want to make a difference? Carry reusable shopping bags! If one person were to choose reusable bags, that person would eliminate the use of 22,000 plastic shopping bags during his or her lifetime. Yes, you read that correctly—22,000 bags. Multiply that by the number of people in a family or community or state, and you begin to see how this one action can have a huge impact on reducing litter and waste.

In addition to eliminating plastic or paper bag waste, these reusable bags also create very little waste of their own. A single bag has the lifespan of 700 disposable bags, meaning that you'll be able to use the same reusable bags for many years and hundreds, if not thousands, of uses.

Because reusable bags often hold grocery items that can be sticky and damp, be sure to let the inside of the bags dry thoroughly before folding them back up for their next use. Hanging the bag inside-out on a peg or chair will usually be adequate.

Since the bags are regularly handled by you and others, it is also a good idea to wash them occasionally. After you've washed them, allow them to dry completely before using them.



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Now, the only challenge is to remember to carry your reusable bags into the store when you shop!

No Impact Man

Colin Beavan had written two books of history when he decided he'd like to write about the environment. But rather than a how-to book, he chose a lifestyle experiment. He set out to answer the question, "Could I, at least for one year, live my life doing more good than harm?" So he, his wife, their baby daughter, and the family dog began their "No Impact" year with the goal of creating as little negative environmental impact as possible. Garbage was the first thing to go, followed by automated transportation, non-local food, new products, and, eventually, most electricity.

Throughout the year, Beavan wrote a blog following the ups and downs of the family's experiment, from giving up shopping to living without elevators (the family lives on the ninth floor of a New York City apartment building). Beavan and his wife, Michelle Conlin, found unexpected pleasure in giving up TV for more reading, outings in the city, and family time with little Isabella. However, trying to do laundry without using the automatic washing machine was a less welcome change. After finishing the No Impact year, the family kept many of the new habits. For instance, they have continued to frequent the farmers market to purchase in-season, regionally-grown foods, and they still use their bikes for much of their transportation. Other habits they have given up. They did switch the electricity back on, but they waste less of it today.

During the project, Beavan struggled to find a way to get what he and his family needed in the most sustainable way possible. Throughout, he continued to ask how he could make a difference. In the book, *No Impact Man*, which records the family's experiment in low-impact living, Beavan concludes, "The job is simply this: to live our lives as though we make a difference. Because, paradoxically, when we imagine we don't make a difference, that is when we do the most harm." In the end, he found that perhaps he had been asking the wrong question. The question is not, is he the type of person who can make a difference, but rather, "whether I'm the type of person who wants to try."

The family's year is also the subject of a

documentary film, also titled *No Impact Man*, which was released in the fall.

Learn more about the project at www.noimpactman.com.



Photos courtesy of Oscilloscope Laboratories

Conscious Consumption

No Impact Man's experiment was a bit extreme. However, learning to be a more conscious consumer can be good for your family, your bank account, and our economy. Colin Beavan's wife, Michelle Conlin, who is a writer and editor at *BusinessWeek*, recently wrote in the magazine's blog, *The Case for Optimism*: "So much talk of sustainability hinges on being less bad. Less plastic. Less packaging. Less resource use. But less bad isn't the answer. The true value comes from delivering more good."

Conscious consumption is about this process of creating "more good." For you, it might be about mak-

ing things with your own hands or moving yourself from place to place with your own human-powered legs. It might be about enjoying the beauty and craft that have gone into creating a lovely and well-designed object. It might be about recycling and reusing more of what you need and use. It might be about understanding how things are made and where the resources originated that are needed to make them. It might be about finding quiet and enjoying the company of the people you love.

For more information, visit www.newdream.org/consumption/.

Plenty of projects with "plarn"

RecycleCindy, owner of My Recycled Bags, creates bags and many other clever items from "plarn," which is yarn made from plastic. The plastic comes from old grocery bags, bread wrappers, cassette tapes, and VHS videotapes. She sometimes uses scrap fabric from denim, bed sheets, and rags, as well. Whatever the material, Cindy crochets clever purses, shoulder bags, totes, and water bottle holders. She also makes dishcloths, pot handle covers, and a variety of other items. She sells many of these items through her website. Each item is one of a kind.

Not content to crochet only her own plarn, RecycleCindy also posts patterns and instructions so that her readers can learn to make their own bags, doll clothes, baby bibs, and much more. Her website includes a step-by-step guide for making your own plarn.

To learn more about making your own plarn creations (or to buy one of RecycleCindy's), visit www.myrecycledbags.com.



A Care Tag for Our Planet

Proper care can extend the life of everything from your refrigerator to your favorite pair of jeans. That's why Goodwill has teamed up with Levi Strauss & Co. on an initiative to promote longer use and more reuse of jeans. The program, A Care Tag for Our Planet, offers consumers instructions for washing less frequently in cold water and line drying to keep the jeans looking and feeling great longer. When the items are no longer wanted, the tag reminds consumers not to throw away the jeans but to donate them to Goodwill for reuse by another consumer.

Washing clothes only when they are dirty and using proper temperature settings and mild detergents will help your clothes last longer. A commitment to reuse by selling or donating unneeded clothes can dramatically reduce the amount of clothing waste headed to landfills. Textile waste, including clothing and other fabric items, tops 12 million tons each year in the U.S. Of this, only about 15% is being recycled.



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Recycling holds steady

Did you know?

Every ton of mixed paper recycled can save the energy equivalent of 185 gallons of gasoline.

Recycling just 1 ton of aluminum cans conserves the equivalent of 1,665 gallons of gasoline.

By recycling and composting 83 million tons of municipal solid waste, we reduced carbon dioxide emissions by an amount equivalent to removing more than 33 million cars from the road, and we saved an amount of energy equivalent to 10.2 billion gallons of gasoline.

Source: *Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States: Facts and Figures for 2008*

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently released its annual report, "Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States," for 2008. Not surprisingly, as the economy slid into recession last year, the total volume of waste generated declined, coming in at just under 250 million tons. This was the first significant decline in nearly 50 years.

Per capita waste generation, or the average amount of waste created per person per day, fell to 4.5 pounds. Per capita generation had already been on the decline before the recession, but fell more substantially in 2008. The pre-2008 decline had been credited to waste reduction and reuse activities, but the 2008 change can most likely be linked to the recession. The per capita waste generation rate has not been this low since 1990.

At the same time, recycling held steady as a percentage of total waste generation, with 33.2% of all waste either recycled or composted. Since 1980, the percentage of waste landfilled has dropped from 89% to just over 54%.

National recycling rates by material were also included in the report. Auto batteries continue to top the list with a recycling rate of 99.2%, followed by office-type papers at 70.9%, yard trimmings at 64.7%, steel cans at 62.8%, and aluminum beverage cans at 48.2%. Other containers, including glass and plastic bottles, jugs, and jars, were recycled at a rate of about 27 to 29%.

The EPA has been collecting and reporting on solid waste annually for more than 30 years. To see the 2008 report, visit www.epa.gov/epawaste/nonhaz/municipal/msw99.htm.

fast facts

Here's an "app" for you!

Earth911.com has launched a new app for iPhone users. iRecycle is a free mobile version featuring Earth911's helpful information and designed to assist users in finding recycling and event information on the go. To learn more, visit <http://earth911.com/products-overview/iphone/>.

If you are out and need information, but you don't have the app, call 1-800-CLEANUP to reach Earth911. You can also use your smart phone or PDA to access the website, www.Earth911.com.

Earth911 provides useful background information on reducing, reusing, and recycling and maintains a database featuring more than 100,000 recycling locations around the country.



Keep it or toss it?

How many times have you stood at the refrigerator asking yourself this question? Now, an easy-to-use website has answers for you. Whether you are wondering how long you can keep opened cheese, if the milk is still good, or what to do with the crisper full of veggies that you really meant to eat, this is the website for you! You'll find it particularly helpful when you face the dreaded condiment shelf in your fridge. Learn more at www.stilltasty.com.



Hitting the right notes

So you are a music lover? And you also want to take good care of the planet? Easy. Download music and put it directly onto your computer and portable music player, such as an iPod, MP3 player, or Zune. A recent study compared the energy use and greenhouse gas emissions of buying CDs at the store or from an online retailer, downloading music and burning it onto CDs at home, and downloading for digital use on the computer and portable player. Not surprisingly, the digital download had the lowest energy use and emissions, as well as the least amount of potential waste from packaging.

Recycling on a roll

The average person in the U.S. uses more than 20,805 sheets of toilet paper annually. Unfortunately, recycled-content paper makes up less than 2% of the toilet tissue used each year. Recycled-content tissue products, including toilet paper, paper towels, and facial tissues, are readily available at grocers, pharmacies, and national retail chains. Not only does recycled-content tissue reduce the demand on forests and tree farms, but it also provides an essential market for our recyclable mixed paper. Next time you shop, give recycled-content tissue a try.



QUOTES REQUOTED

I shall walk softly there,
And learn by going where I have to go.
Theodore Roethke, 1908-1963
American poet



Back to the Future!

The Lake County Solid Waste Management District Educators will be talking trash at the annual Legislative Luncheon on Tuesday, February 2! Garbage to Ethanol will be the hot topic when the District visits with the state legislators. All 60+ Indiana solid waste management districts are invited to attend this event each year to speak with our state legislators in support of our environmental mission.

Free Educator Workshop!

G.E.M.S. (Great Explorations in Math and Science) activities provide students with hands-on experiences that teach standards-based science and mathematics skills. This program, which was developed by the Lawrence Hall of Science at the University of California at Berkeley, has been tested in thousands of classrooms across the country and includes an array of teacher guides and handbooks.

The Lake County Solid Waste Management District invites K-8 teachers to attend a two-day G.E.M.S. training session on Thursday, February 25, and Friday, February 26, from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. each day. The training session will be held at the Environmental Education Center at 2405 Calumet Avenue in Hammond. There is no cost to Lake County, Indiana teachers.

Teachers must register no later than Friday, February 19. Space is limited, so reserve your spot today! Contact Angela at apetyko@lcswmd.com.

Less waste, more savings

At work, home, and school, paper is everywhere. We often hit “print” without thinking, only to sit right in front of the computer to read the document on paper that we could have just read on-screen. What a waste!

Rethinking how we use paper can go a long way in reducing the amount of paper that we have to recycle or dispose. It can also save us money because the less paper we use, the less we need to buy. As an added bonus, when we print and copy less, we also use less ink and toner, creating even more savings and conserving additional resources!

Here are some simple ideas for creating less paper waste and more savings:

- ❖ Communicate as much as possible by email.
- ❖ Don't print out emails. If you need to save a message, create an electronic folder for it. If you must print a hard copy, print only the page(s) you need to file.
- ❖ Remind others not to print your emails by adding a note to your signature line. You might recommend, “Consider the environment before printing this email,” or a similar message.
- ❖ Print and copy on both sides of the paper whenever possible.
- ❖ Set aside unneeded paper that is printed on only one side to be reused. You can use the back side to print drafts or as scratch paper.
- ❖ Print out only the portion of a document that you need by highlighting the text and printing “selection only.”
- ❖ Bookmark websites and create favorites folders by category or topic. Don't print information that you can easily retrieve on the Internet.
- ❖ Edit and review documents on-screen. If you need to check the formatting before you print, use the print preview feature.
- ❖ Reduce the width of your margins to get more text on a single page of paper.
- ❖ When possible, print your files to PDF and email them, rather than printing hard copies.
- ❖ For group editing projects, learn to use the “track changes” or “edit and comment” features built into your programs.
- ❖ Choose recycled-content paper. Don't just assume that all printer and copier paper is recycled content, because it isn't. Look for “post-consumer recycled-content paper.” When you purchase it, you help create markets for recyclable paper.
- ❖ Reuse envelopes by placing a label over the original address. (If you will be mailing the envelope, be sure to cover any bar code by blacking it out with a permanent marker or putting a label over it.)
- ❖ Reuse file and pocket folders. Just add new labels.
- ❖ Break down and flatten boxes for future



- use. Keep packing material, such as packing paper or peanuts, in a box or bag for use when you ship packages.
- ❖ Share magazine subscriptions with friends, co-workers, classmates, and family members. Subscribe to newsletters online whenever possible.
- ❖ Recycle your unneeded paper. Make sure the recycling bin for paper is located near a trash can or where paper is often used. People are more likely to recycle when it is convenient.

To learn more, visit www.paperrecycles.org, www.environmentalpaper.org, www.stopwaste.org/paperless, or www.whatsinyourpaper.com.



Fast Facts

| | |
|---|------------|
| Consumption of paper per person per year in the U.S. | 592 pounds |
| Paper recycled per person per year in the U.S. | 340 pounds |
| Paper recycling rate in the U.S. (2008)..... | 57.4% |
| Number of sheets of paper used each year by the average U.S. office worker..... | 10,000 |
| Share of printed-on office paper that is discarded within one day..... | 45% |
| Share of newsstand magazines that never reach consumers..... | 70% |
| Average recycled content in printing and writing papers | 6% |

Sources: American Forest & Paper Association, Environmental Paper Network, Conservatree

Won't you be my neighbor?

Mr. Rogers was right—we can all benefit from having and being neighbors. A study by Harvard University found that about one-third of Americans no longer participate in social activities, such as inviting people into their homes or visiting friends and relatives. Sociologists refer to this as a loss of “social capital,” connections between people built on shared concern and trust. The loss of social capital increases feelings of isolation and decreases our civic engagement and our ability to face community challenges constructively.

The good news is that rebuilding social capital doesn't have to be that hard. Take a batch of homemade cookies to a neighbor

and say hello. Join a group or take a class. Volunteer in one of our programs, through another community organization, or at a school or hospital. Talk to the person next to you in line at the store. Walk through your neighborhood without your earbuds in and introduce yourself to the people you meet.

Building social capital is a waste-free pastime that is good for all of us.



Exchanges unite haves and have-nots

Reuse networks are not just for old sports gear and small household appliances. Many businesses take part in “materials exchanges” that allow them to post a listing of materials which they “have” or “want.” These items might be surplus raw materials, off-spec products, unneeded byproducts, office supplies, shipping cartons, pallets, or partially used containers of chemicals or solvents.

Like Craigslist or Freecycle, these exchanges are information services only. The businesses involved post descriptions of the materials they have available or want. The posting and responding businesses make arrangements by email and/or phone, negotiating price, transportation, and other details.

To learn more about materials exchanges that serve businesses and organizations in our area, visit the Indiana Materials Xchange at www.in.gov/

recycle/5633.htm.

You can also post items for sale in classified advertisements in the local newspaper or online through services such as Craigslist. If you have items that you are



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willing to give away (or are seeking items for free), visit www.ThrowPlace.com, www.Freecycle.org, or www.gigoit.org.

We want your suggestions, questions, and comments!

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