



Effingham Recycles

November Newsletter 2018

Our Second Newsletter!

Hello and welcome to the Effingham Recycles Newsletter. We have a lot of great ideas for reducing your waste on a day-to-day basis and some festive waste reduction tips for the holidays! As the Founder and Chair of Effingham Recycles, I wanted to give you all an update on our organization.

Our team has been working hard behind the scenes on several projects! One of those was our Second Annual *America Recycles Day* event on November 17. Our team members were at the Centenary United Methodist Church's recycling bins with hot coffee and donuts. We helped separate items into the correct bins and shared some of our recycling knowledge. We also visited fifth grade science classes this month at Teutopolis and St. Anthony grade schools, and we hope to visit the rest of the county schools as part of our Earth Day Celebration in the spring.

We have also been collaborating with the Effingham County Health Department's Environmental Health Director to put together a tipping fee proposal for the Management Committee's consideration. Our survey last year gave us a lot of insight into the needs that are going unmet, and we are hopeful that these funds will be wisely spent to increase the quality of environmental services in Effingham County.

Did you know that the Effingham Recycles team has a dual identity? We are also the Impact 2030—Quality Environment committee! Impact 2030 is an initiative of the Effingham County Chamber of Commerce, and we are proud to be part of their efforts to *Move Forward Together*. We have a new project in the works under the Quality Environment name that will put Effingham in line for the future of clean energy!

Please enjoy the rest of the newsletter and try to incorporate some of our waste reduction tips into your own lives!

-Sarah Ruholl Sehy, JD, *Founder and Chair of Effingham Recycles*

In This Issue

- Spotlight: Plastic
- Celebrating *America Recycles Day* in Schools
- This Holiday Season: Choose to Refuse!
- Single Use Swaps



The team celebrating America Recycles Day.

Material Spotlight:

Plastics—Why Do They Matter?

Anna Grimes

If you looked in your lunch bag right now, what would you see? A drink and a sandwich? Maybe some silverware to go with a salad? Take another look, what do all of these items have in common? They are probably all stored in single-use plastic. Plastics are everywhere, as well as plastic awareness, but why does it matter? Let's start with the basics.



The scientific definition will describe the different polymers used and the processes these materials go through to become a final product. However, the reason plastics create issues is because of how the fossil fuels used in plastics are extracted and they can result in oil spills. Since plastics are not natural, they do not break down completely in the environment. Instead, they break up into tiny microplastics and often end up on the ground and ultimately the ocean. Animals and marine life mistake them for food and are harmed. Recent studies found that these plastics eventually end up in us—humans!

While recycling is a great option to solve our plastic pollution problem, the better answer is to reduce our use, and reuse what we can. We are in a time of transition, from convenience back to reusable. Single use and convenience was exciting for awhile, but the impacts are starting to catch up. Today, Effingham Recycles encourages you to start seeing plastics in your everyday choices and choose to refuse!

Did You Know?

*The Great Pacific Garbage Patch isn't the only garbage patch polluting our oceans. Scientists have discovered at least **five**.*

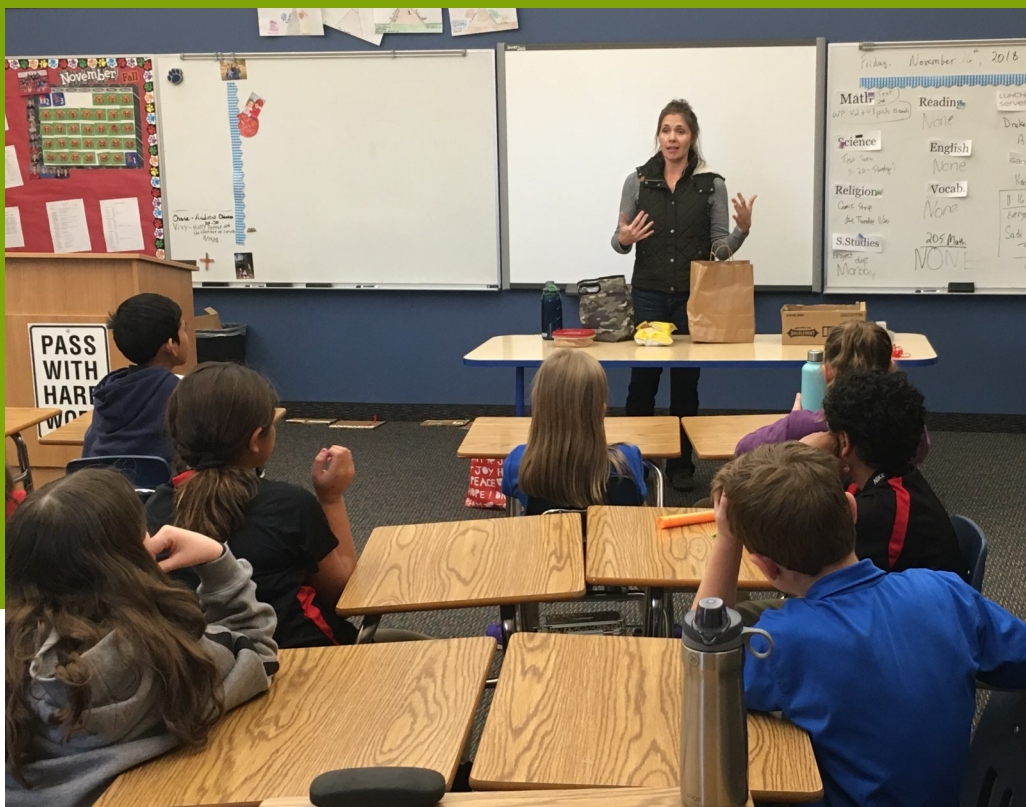
Celebrating *America Recycles Day* in Local Schools

Anna Grimes

This month, we celebrated America Recycles Day. In addition to our Second Annual America Recycles Day event on November 17, our team put together an educational recycling presentation for 5th graders. Joanna Davies and Bill Elving visited St. Anthony Grade School and Teutopolis Grade School.

After learning about what recycling is and why it matters from Bill, Joanna took over and talked about reducing and reusing. She presented a lunch packed in single-use materials and a lunch packed in all reusable packaging. When she pulled out her reusable canvas bag, several students exclaimed, "That's from Aldi's!" Students had plenty of time to ask questions and share their own stories about making environmentally friendly choices. "My grandparents recycle aluminum cans and give us the money since we are the ones drinking the soda," one St. Anthony 5th grader described. "Some people buy plastic water bottles because it is convenient," another student observed. Bill assured the kids that Effingham County's water was safe to drink and encouraged the use of reusable water bottles.

Our team plans on continuing these educational programs to more surrounding areas as we get closer to Earth Day.



This Holiday Season: Choose to *Refuse*

Joanna Davies



As we enter the season of hyper-consumption, challenge yourself and your family to follow a few (or all!) of these ten “green consumption” tactics to avoid generating unnecessary waste.

1. When buying gifts, invest in quality products that will last a long time

Leather vs. pleather, wood or metal vs. plastic (particularly important when buying toys); well-made, classic clothing vs. fast, disposable fashion are all wise choices. Cheap items end up in the landfill too quickly. Better yet, buy experiences like concert tickets, museum passes or fitness vouchers instead.

2. Shop locally instead of online

Ditch the cardboard Amazon box and excessive packaging in exchange for using your own reusable bag at a local store. The added bonus is keeping your money in our community.

3. Buy locally handmade vs mass produced

Locally handmade items are not packaged nor shipped long distances like their mass produced counterparts. Oftentimes locally made items are also made with reused materials.

4. Take unwanted items to a thrift store rather than throwing them away

So often I hear of people who've chosen to throw away something perfectly good just because they no longer want it and don't want to haul it to a thrift store. We really need to try harder to prevent items that could have a second or third life from entering the landfill.

5. Pledge to buy a few second-hand items this year

Whether it's a book, quirky vintage item or like-new shirt, previously used items can make perfect gifts. We need to get away from believing that only brand-new items are gift-worthy and start thinking outside of the big box store.

6. Avoid buying into the hype of this holiday's "must have" item

It happens every year. We're bombarded with advertisements about the "it" kitchen gadget, electronic or kids' game. Examples of these include the Keurig and the Pie Face! kids' game. Landfills are FULL of old Keurigs (not to mention K-cups) as people want the bigger and fancier versions. What's wrong with a good old coffee pot or maybe even a percolator? Don't even get me started about the kids' games like Pie Face! that are good for a laugh at Christmastime but quickly end up thrown away because they're no longer exciting.

7. At family gatherings, use real dinnerware instead of plastic

Many hands during clean-up make for quick work and your trash can won't be full of single-use garbage. Remember, plastic Solo cups are not recyclable. Just because an item has the three arrow recycling symbol does not mean it can be recycled locally.

8. Prepare dishes "from scratch"

In a local grocery store I noticed a package of a dozen cookies sitting on a Styrofoam tray, wrapped in a plastic bag, closed with a twist tie and then encased in a giant hard plastic container. So much unnecessary waste! Make your own cookies and package them in a reusable festive tin instead. If you don't have time to bake, then consider the packaging when buying cookies in the store and choose those with the least amount of waste.

9. Plan ahead

When you're going out either shopping or on a long-distance trip, remember to fill reusable bottles with drinks and maybe even go totally old-school and pack your lunch. Fast food meals generate so much waste and we tend to revert to them even more so during the busy holiday season.

10. Ditch the plastic water bottles!

Seriously. We're blessed to live in a place where we have perfectly safe tap water. If you want cold water, fill a glass container with tap water and keep that in your fridge. Fill your reusable water bottle before you leave the house. If you don't like the taste of your tap water, then consider using a filtered water pitcher. Americans used 50 billion (that's with a "b") plastic water bottles last year; vow to not contribute to that number this year.

With just a little thought we can change behavior – more refusing and reusing – and collectively prevent a few tons of waste from entering the landfill this holiday season.

Single Use Swaps

Shelley Smith

Have you ever thought about how many things you throw away every day? Until earlier this year, this never crossed my mind. In March I was looking at my budget and came across my trash bill which was something like \$16 per month. I thought, "You know, I'd much rather spend that \$16 on something useful instead of garbage." I decided that I was going to make it my goal to not have to pay for trash pickup by the end of the summer.

The first thing I did was count how many objects I threw away one day - that day I threw away 48 items. The same evening I did some research on what can and cannot be recycled. I realized that every single item I tossed away to go to a landfill could be recycled or reused in some way. The next day I came up with a recycling system and started using it. By the end of the next week I noticed I hadn't changed the trash bag all week. I was able to cancel my trash pickup by the end of April!

Since that day in March I have been hyper aware of the garbage that I create and looking for ways to reduce my reliance on single use plastics. Some of the biggest changes I have made are in the kitchen. I used up my single use zip top bags, plastic wrap and aluminum foil and replaced them with reusable silicone zip bags, beeswax wraps and glass containers. It takes the same amount of time to put my sandwich or leftovers for lunch the next day in a reusable zip bag or a container as it did a single use zip bag. These sound like such small swaps but the overall impact is huge.

These are just a couple of the changes I started with on my journey to reduce my reliance on plastic. Some of the other changes I've successfully made include using shampoo/conditioner/soap bars rather than bottled liquid products, using cloth napkins and regular towels instead of paper napkins and towels, not purchasing disposable cups, plates or cutlery and bringing my own cup and reusable silicone straw pretty much everywhere I go. I challenge you to try out at least one of these swaps and see how easy it is!

Get Involved!

Contact Sarah for information on the next monthly meeting.

Contact Us

effinghamrecycles@yahoo.com



Visit Us On The Web!

www.effinghamrecycles.org

[facebook.com/
effinghamrecycles/](https://facebook.com/effinghamrecycles/)