



All Star News



Lessons Learned-Introducing Zero Waste

– Patricia Watson
TOWSON UNIVERSITY

Towson University (TU) hosted its first zero-waste event in 2015 at its annual Employee Appreciation Picnic. The event was designed to introduce the concept of zero-waste to TU faculty and staff.

The infrastructure for a successful event has been in place for years. Food scraps are collected from TU's kitchens and dining services recently converted to mostly compostable packaging.

At the event, several waste stations comprised of recycling and compost bins were set up amongst the tables. Graphic signage was added to the bins, and the waste removal crew was briefed on how to handle the

various types of waste. Also, at the event kick off, TU Associate Vice President of Auxiliary Services offered welcoming remarks and incorporated information about the zero-waste goal into his message.

Unfortunately, things didn't work out as planned. It was assumed that contamination would not be a problem due to the signs placed on each bin. However, it quickly became clear that the comprehensive signage showing an image of every compostable product was too overwhelming for the participants. This coupled with the timing of the event that prevented student employees and volunteers from assisting with the monitoring of the waste stations resulted in the waste streams rapidly becoming contaminated. Much time afterwards was spent sorting through the bins and trying to place the items in the correct bins.

Certainly the attendees understood how to recycle the materials collected at the event. However, by labeling the event "zero-waste" and adding the unfamiliar compost labels to the bins, people's daily habits unraveled. In the end, the goal of the zero-waste event was met, although not without a few bumps in the road.

TU hosted its second official zero-waste event at a basketball game on

February 13, 2016. For this event there was improved signage, additional reminders and waste station volunteers to assist with sorting. This event went much smoother without any of the issues encountered during the Employee Appreciation Picnic.

Moving forward, TU will use the more assistive approach used during the basketball game for events as it continues to educate the campus community about the importance of source reduction, waste diversion, proper recycling and the possibility of achieving zero waste.

2015 All StAR Reports

– Christy Bujnovszky
Department Staff

In 2014, the Department instituted a new All StAR online reporting system to capture the annual recycling data. As requested, on February 17, 2016 the Department held a refresher course on how to complete the All StAR reports using the online reporting system.

The 2015 reports are due to the Department by March 18, 2016. Please contact christy.bujnovszky@maryland.gov with any questions.

RECYCLING CONTACTS

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