



# Talkin' Trash

Fall 2006

A Teacher's Newsletter from the Ecology Action Center

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## Cash for your Trash

Illinois Offers Recycling Funds for Schools

One of the simplest ways to become more sustainable is to recycle. In schools, students can learn what can be recycled so they can apply that knowledge at home – two areas where reducing waste is a great opportunity to help make our planet a better place to live. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) wants to help schools achieve this goal and is now offering grants to Illinois public and nonpublic schools to implement/expand recycling and waste reduction programs. Called the Zero Waste Grant Program, this grant is available for 2007. The deadline for applications is November 1, 2006.

The maximum award granted to schools is \$10,000 per school and districts can apply for multiple schools within the district. Illinois public school districts must submit only one application for the total number of schools participating in the zero waste project. For example, a district applying for five schools may submit one application and request up to \$50,000.

Grant funds may be used to purchase necessary items such as collection and storage containers, shredders, reusable plates and silverware, or composting containers. For more information or to download an application, go to [www.illinoisrecycles.com](http://www.illinoisrecycles.com) or [www.istep.org](http://www.istep.org). You may also write to the Illinois DCEO, Bureau of Energy and Recycling, Illinois Zero Waste Schools Grant Program, 620 East Adams Street, Springfield, IL 62701-1615.

## McLean County Recycles Day Calendar Contest

Our first ever **McLean County Recycles Day** calendar for 2007 will be published this November featuring the artwork of McLean County elementary school students.

We are looking for 12 original pictures depicting ways to reducing our use of natural resources. Topics can include reducing the amount of garbage in our landfills by recycling, reusing materials, or by purchasing products with less packaging. Other topics can include composting, energy efficiency, renewable energy, or water conservation.

Drawing must be on 8 ½ x 11" paper using landscape format (i.e., 8 ½" tall by 11" wide). You may use markers, paint, or crayons. Be sure to make it brightly colored to stand out on the calendar.

In the picture include a message related to the theme of the drawing. Please **DO NOT** write the month on your picture. We will assign months. On the back of your drawing, include your name, school, grade, and a contact number where we can reach you.

Entries must be received by Wednesday, November 8, 2006. Winners will be notified Friday, November 10. Prizes will be awarded to winners during a celebration at the Children's Discovery Museum on Saturday, November 11, 2006.

### Ecology Action Center

202 W. College Avenue  
Normal Illinois 61761  
Phone: (309) 454-3169  
Fax: (309) 454-7508  
[www.ecologyactioncenter.org](http://www.ecologyactioncenter.org)

11-6 p.m. Mon.-Thurs.  
11-5 p.m. Fri.



# Sustainable Schools

*Illinois' 76,000 farms cover more than 28 million acres— nearly 80% of the state's total land area.*

*The United States uses 346,000 million gallons of water each day*

*Roughly 70% of the human body is water.*

## Farmers + Schools = Healthy Food!

“Farm to School” Movement Brings Healthier Food to School Lunches

Most of the food on your school lunch tray – or your dinner table – has traveled about 1,500 miles to get to you. With our advanced agricultural model, food is being grown and produced all over the world and then shipped back to local grocery stores. According to the Organic Consumers Association, 25% of all greenhouse gases in the United States is a by-product of industrial agriculture, food processing and food transportation.

To combat this environmentally-polluting model, a new movement, known as “Farm to School,” advocates working with local farmers in your area to make the most of local food resources. Schools are partnering with farmers to incorporate local produce and meats and dairy into their school lunch menus, with the goal of serving healthy food, improving student nutrition, providing educational opportunities and supporting local family farmers.

Interested? Check out [www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org) for more information.

## Just Say No to Bottled Water

Water has been called the oil of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Many experts predict that future wars will be fought over access to our freshwater resources. Learning to appreciate water as a precious resource is critical to the future of our planet. Case in point: Our city and town water systems work hard to maintain healthy and safe drinking water. It's affordable, easily accessible, and always available. Yet, more and more often, we turn to bottled water when we're thirsty. Bottled water is now available in nearly every gas station, grocery store, and school vending machine across the country. In fact, in just five years, the United States has doubled its consumption of bottled water, to an estimated 7.3 billion gallons in 2005, according to the Beverage Marketing Corp.



While deemed healthier for our students than soda, it's not any healthier than what flows from your faucet at home or school (and it's up to 2,000 times more pricey!). It also isn't subject to the same level of regulation as tap water is, nor is it tested as rigorously. On a global scale, it's wasteful and damaging to the environment. Nine out of 10 water bottles end up in landfills – that's 30 million discarded plastic bottles each day. And, each year, more nearly 2 million tons of plastic is used to package all our bottled water, according to the Sierra Club. The production of this plastic leads to the release of a variety of chemicals, which generate toxic emissions.

Encourage your students to buy a water bottle and refill it at the water fountain or at the tap at home, instead of dumping dollars into the vending machine. With the money they'll save, they'll have more in their pocket for fun and they'll be making our planet a better place to live. Encourage your students to research the quality of your public drinking water. For information about your local drinking water, go to [www.epa.gov/safewater/dwinfo.htm](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/dwinfo.htm).



# Activities Page

*Rain gardens are sustainable through drought, flood and summer break*

*There are more than 10 resale and consignment shops in McLean County*

## Rainy Day Project: Build a Rain Garden

Rainy days don't have to be depressing. What if you could recycle rain to create a beautiful garden in your yard? Homeowners across the country are jumping on the rain garden trend by landscaping areas with wild flowers and other native vegetation that soaks up rainwater. Compared to the average lawn, rain gardens soak up 30% more water, which helps refill our local and regional aquifers and protects communities from flooding and drainage problems.

On a larger scale, rain gardens can reduce the pollution that flows from storm water runoff. As our cities and suburbs grow, urban storm water gets loaded down with lawn fertilizers and pesticides, oil, and chemicals from roofs and paved areas. These pollutants flood our rivers and lakes. But, by building a rain garden, the storm water running off your roof will soak into the ground where pollutants are filtered instead of going into storm drains.

Once established, rain gardens require little maintenance and expense. They should be created in one of two places: Near a house to catch roof runoff or further out on the lawn to collect water from the lawn and the roof. (Rain gardens should always be built at least 10 feet from the house so excess water doesn't seep into your foundation.)

The University of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources teamed up to create a how-to manual on building rain gardens, which is available at [www.clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/raingarden](http://www.clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/raingarden).

## Fall Contest: Design New Fashions Using Recyclable Goods

With all the stories in the news about limited natural resources and overflowing landfills, and to celebrate America Recycles Day on November 15, 2006, the Ecology Action Center is challenging high school students across McLean County to create a fashionable accessory item (jewelry, purses, shoes, etc.) using either materials they already have, or items they can find at garage sales, thrift stores, and re-sale shops. While artistic expression is important, we are looking for items that are functional as well as unique and creative in design. We are offering \$100 as the top prize. So put your thinking caps on (or create one!) and join in to help Save the Planet.

Rules: Must be an original design using pre-used material (you may purchase paint or embellishments such as beads, glitter, etc.). A written description detailing the origin of the materials used must accompany the piece. Entries must be received by 3:30 p.m. on November 8, 2006, at the Ecology Action Center, 202 W College Ave. Normal, IL. The winner will be notified November 10, and presentation of award and displaying of top entries will be November 11 at the Children's Discovery Museum. You don't have to be present to win. Must include your name, grade level, school, and contact information. Any questions? Call the Ecology Action Center at 309/454-3169 or go to [www.ecologyactioncenter.org](http://www.ecologyactioncenter.org).

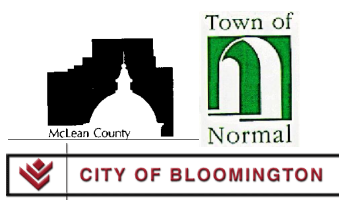
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202 W. College Ave. Normal, IL 61761  
www.ecologyactioncenter.org  
Email: eac@ecologyactioncenter.org  
Phone: 309-454-3169 Fax: 309-454-7508

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## Opportunities for Teachers

### Celebrate International Walk to School Week

Walking to school is a great way to get some exercise and reduce pollution in our air. More than 3,000 schools in the United States – and students in 36 countries - participate in the annual Walk to School Week, which takes place this year on October 2-6. For more ideas, go to [www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org).

### Illinois Teacher Resources

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has grants, workshops and educational materials available for teachers. Check out [dnr.state.il.us/lands/education/index.htm](http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/education/index.htm) for more information.

### What can the Ecology Action Center do for You?

- Come to your classroom or Earth Club to present Waste, Recycling, Energy Conservation, Water Quality or Ecology Lessons
- Provide materials and assist in planning your ecology units
- Lend materials from our resource library
- Field trip location for a small class or present lessons at the Children's Discovery Museum
- Assist with recycling or other environmental problems or questions