



# Talkin' Trash

Spring 2008

A Teacher's Newsletter from the Ecology Action Center

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**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)

9-5 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

## *INHOUSE Field Trips*

If you haven't yet scheduled your class for our exciting free programs, there is still time. Remember we offer Earth Schools recycling program to all 4th grade students in McLean County. Part one of this hands-on program teaches the importance of recycling as well as preserving our natural resources and reducing waste. Part two kicks things up a notch with a variety of activities encouraging students to look at their personal lunches and ways to reduce trash in addition to learning about composting, a natural way to dispose of organic waste and create fertile soil in the process. Students also learn about aluminum recycling and how efficient the process is while playing a colorful board game designed to highlight the energy saving realized through recycling in addition to making a piece of recycled paper.

Third grade students have been fascinated by the enviroscape watershed model as we discuss the properties of water and the water cycle. With all the discussion on water quality lately, this is a very timely subject and one that will stay with the children long after we leave the classroom.

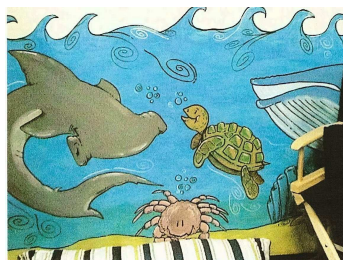
The energy bike has proved a popular program for many organizations (such as scouts, 4-H, etc) throughout McLean County. We have been providing this program to 6th grade for several years and if your classes have not yet been scheduled, please contact DeAnna Belz at (309) 454-3169.

## **Your 'Perfect Park' Art Contest**

The Ecology Action Center annually hosts a spring art contest. This year all K-5<sup>th</sup> grade students from McLean County Schools are challenged to draw a picture of the "Best Park or Playground" they can imagine. Ask them to be creative, adding rainforests, butterfly gardens, or little areas for their favorite animals etc. Please use an 8-1/2 x 11 inch paper, and they may use colored pencils, markers, paint or crayons to complete their environmental picture.

Jr. and Sr. High School students are asked to be a little more techno-savvy in producing their "perfect" environment using a digital camera and photo editing software. Printed and mounted pictures should measure at least 8 x 10 inches.

All winning entries will be displayed and awarded prizes at the Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo on April 12.





# Sustainable Schools

*The average school-age child throws away 67 lbs. of lunch waste per school year!*

*Packing a waste-free lunch is easy once you make it part of your daily routine.*

*Parents can save hundreds of \$\$ filling screw-top 'sippie' cups instead of buying disposable juice boxes.*

## Kudos to Carlock

Last month, Carlock Elementary School participated in a lunchroom waste audit test program to see just how much waste is produced in their lunchroom on average, and if there are ways to reduce the waste. During the week of February 18, all lunchroom waste was collected and weighed. They produced 38 pounds on average daily over the course of the next 4 days. On Friday, February 22, the Ecology Action Center gave a brief presentation during morning assembly on ways the students could reduce that waste by recycling their milk cartons and other recyclable containers, composting their food scraps and avoiding throw away lunches by packing in reusable containers when bringing lunch from home. The following week (February 25—28), the students with assistance from their custodian and kitchen staff were able to collect on average 4 pounds of recyclables and 26 pounds of food waste daily. This food was then sent to be composted. They reduced their average daily garbage to from 38 lbs. to 5 lbs. For a sample lesson plan, go to [www.monroecounty.gov/Image/LESSON13.pdf](http://www.monroecounty.gov/Image/LESSON13.pdf)

## Reduce Your Waste (one classroom at a time)

Illustrate lunchroom waste in your own classroom. Without preparing your students ahead of time, have them bring all their lunchroom waste back to the classroom one day and spread it out on newspapers, or fill an empty garbage can. Discuss the volume of waste and how it can be reduced. Plan a set day and encourage them to bring a waste-free lunch from home if possible. Again, spread out newspapers to dump their lunchroom waste on or place in the same empty garbage container as before. How much did they reduce by? Turn this project into a social lesson, a math lesson or have them write about the results of their experiment.

For a free poster on reducing lunchroom waste and more, visit:  
[www.epa.gov/epaoswer/education/lunch.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/education/lunch.htm)



Additional resources:

<http://library.thinkquest.org/06aug/00442/wastefreelunch.htm>  
[http://www.greeningschools.org/resources/view\\_cat\\_admin.cfm?id=93](http://www.greeningschools.org/resources/view_cat_admin.cfm?id=93)  
<http://www.wastefreelunches.org/HowTo.html>



# You can help!

*Tap water is still the best choice.*

*8 out of 10 plastic water bottles used in the US end up in the garbage.*

*Recycled, one-of-a-kind, clothing boutiques are popping up all over the country.*

## Take Back the Tap



Consumers today spend billions of dollars each year on bottled water. Is it because we perceive this water to be safer? However, did you know that nearly 40 percent of bottled water is simply bottled tap water. What's more, there's no government agency testing bottled water for contamination from many known hazards such as bacteria and some heavy metals. Bottled water generally is no cleaner, or safer, or healthier than tap water. In fact, the federal government requires far more stringent and frequent safety testing and monitoring of municipal drinking water. Furthermore, the production of bottled water causes many equity, public health, and environmental problems. The big beverage companies often take water from municipal or underground sources that local people depend on for drinking water. And producing the plastic bottles uses energy and emits toxic chemicals. Then we truck bottled this bottled water across hundreds of miles precious fossil fuels all the while contributing to the greenhouse gases that complicate our efforts to combat global warming. Is this not incredibly wasteful? And ultimately, many of these empty bottles end up in landfills. So rather than buying into this myth of purity in a bottle, I encourage you to 'take back the tap.'

For more information on Take Back the Tap, visit [www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/pubs/reports/take-back-the-tap](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/pubs/reports/take-back-the-tap)

## Expanded Affordable Fashion Challenge

We are approaching our 3rd annual Affordable Fashion Challenge and Show held April 12 at the IWU Shirk Center during the Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo, and because we have had so much enthusiasm and interest, this year we have added two more categories. The competition is now open to all community members (not just students) and we've included home decorating and interior design. As before, the main piece of the item (whether it be wearable or used in the home) must be from pre-used materials. We encourage participants to visit thrift-



stores, garage sales, check the attic, and now even search the basement or scan the curb. For a complete list of the rules and to download an application, visit the website at [www.islwe.org](http://www.islwe.org).



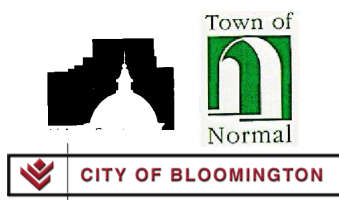
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202 W. College Ave. Normal, IL 61761  
www.ecologyactioncenter.org  
Email: eac@ecologyactioncenter.org  
Phone: 309-454-3169 Fax: 309-454-7508

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## Upcoming Events

### IL Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo 2008

April 11 10 am-3 pm

April 12 9 am-4 pm

Join over 100 exhibitors and 20 presenters at the Illinois Wesleyan University Shirk Center to learn about the many aspects of sustainability and wellness. Our theme this year is Wellness: Farm to Fork. Look for special food-related workshops, samples, and information. The event is free and open to the public.

For more details visit [www.islwe.org](http://www.islwe.org)



Coming this spring — May 12-18, 2008

**PREVENTION does a body good** -a collaborative educational event featuring a variety of workshops and seminars throughout the community aimed at raising awareness of the health impacts some everyday products can have on us, and what we can do to lower our risk of exposure. Keep tuned to our website:  
[www.ecologyactioncenter.org](http://www.ecologyactioncenter.org)