



ECOLOGY NEWS

ACTION CENTER

Volume 14, Issue 4

Winter 2016

Upcoming Events

JANUARY

Sugar Creek
Stewards Workday
Saturday, Jan 21

FEBRUARY

Sugar Creek
Stewards Workday
Saturday, Feb 18

MARCH

Sugar Creek
Stewards Workday
Saturday, March 18

APRIL

IL Sustainable Living
& Wellness Expo
IWU Shirk Center
Saturday, April 8

Sugar Creek
Stewards Workday
Saturday, April 15

Solar Bloomington-Normal: A Shining Success!

In April, the Ecology Action Center partnered with the Midwest Renewable Energy Association to bring their solar group-buy program to Bloomington-Normal. The group-buy program in Champaign-Urbana was very successful and MREA thought our community would be a good candidate to continue the program. We got off to a slow start, but are proud to say that at the end of the program in October, 32 homes and businesses in McLean county are installing 435kW of solar! As a result, they'll offset an estimated 830,000 pounds of CO₂, and will save almost \$50,000 on utility bills in the next year alone.

StraightUp Solar, the solar contractor selected, is based in St. Louis but also has a Bloomington office. Their proposal secured prices for participants at 15-20% lower than average market prices, and placed 1% rebates at three different kW milestone in the program. Collectively, we surpassed all three group-buy milestones (100kW, 150kW and 250 kW) resulting in a 3% rebate for participants on top of the already lower than average negotiated group-buy pricing.

The EAC and StraightUp Solar staff shared details about the program and the benefits of solar through 22 free informational Solar Power Hours hosted at a variety of local businesses and non-profits throughout the community. A big thank you to all of those locations for helping us grow solar in Bloomington-Normal.

The program's success is also due in large part to the strong interest and support from home and business owners like you. The numbers were also boosted by larger business installations at the new "Foundry" site under construction (future home to Green Top Grocery, Bloomington Cycle and Fitness, and the Gingerbread House) with a 124kW array and Varney Law with a 75kW array.

With the success of this program, we hope to continue to expand renewable energy in our community. Thank you to everyone who participated and congratulations on your new solar systems!

Solar 
Bloomington-Normal

SolarBloomingtonNormal.com

Gift Ideas

- * Tickets to movies, musicals, plays & concerts
- * Tours, excursions, hikes
- * Classes or lessons
- * Bus or Train passes
- * Services such as lawn care, housecleaning, or auto maintenance
- * Gift certificates for haircuts, spa treatments & massages, rock climbing or a nice meal

EAC Green Gifts

- * Washable lunch bags
- * Energy Check-Up Gift Certificate
- * Rain Barrel
- * Compost Pail
- * Wine Bottle Spoon Holder
- * Chico Bags
- * Reusable Gift Wrap

"Can I Put This In My Bin?" A Twin Cities Recycling Update

Most members of the Ecology Action Center receiving this newsletter are already avid recyclers. However, it's always a good idea to get an update since things in the recycling business change fairly frequently.

Why do things change? Recycling is all about economics. If the handler processing our single stream recycling (Midwest Fiber) can't find a buyer for a particular commodity, they can no longer collect it. For example, when the City of Bloomington began using the large-wheeled carts and automated pick-up, the rules said gable-topped paperboard cartons were acceptable. That changed about a year ago. Containers like soy milk cartons and large chicken stock boxes are now supposed to go in the garbage, not the recycling bin. Many people want EVERYTHING to be recycled, but wishing doesn't make it so. When people err on the side of "I'll just put it all in the bin and they can sort it out if it's wrong", that causes a lot more work for the staff at Midwest Fiber, and in some cases, damage to their equipment. It is very important for us to get it right as often as we can.

The City of Bloomington and the Town of Normal collect single-stream recycling items from residents and take it to Midwest Fiber. There, it gets sorted into about 20 different bins - various grades of paper, different types of plastic, etc. Those materials are baled and shipped out when an entire truckload (or more) of one item is collected. Some items are processed as close as Chicago, but some are shipped as far away as China!

Here are the basic items we can put in single-stream recycling containers:

- * All types of paper, paperboard and cardboard (except gable-topped cartons)
- * Aluminum cans and clean aluminum foil and trays
- * Steel food cans (labels do NOT have to be removed)
- * Plastic food and beverage containers #1-5 and #7 - please re-attach lids/caps if they are also plastic.
- * Glass jars and bottles from food and beverages; metal lids should be placed in bin separately.
(Note: all containers should be rinsed.)

These items should NOT go in single-stream recycling containers:

- * Plastic #6 - Polystyrene egg cartons, dishware, #6 cups and containers
- * Plastic shopping bags
- * Electronics, including cords and wires
- * Batteries of any kind
- * Plastic bottles used for disposing of hypodermic needles
- * Plastic bottles that held chemicals or motor oil
- * Propane tanks
- * Paper containers for liquids: including juice boxes and gable top cartons - usually for milk, juice or wine



A number of items you cannot put in your single-stream recycling are recyclable SOMEWHERE in Bloomington-Normal. We host “mega recycling” events twice a year to promote recycling non-traditional items and to provide a convenient one-stop drop off for those items. Please don’t put the following items in your single-stream bin or the garbage.

Non-traditional items you can recycle in the community:

- Plastic Shopping Bags – located at any major grocer
- Electronics – Home Sweet Home Ministries (working) & Town of Normal Public Works Garage (non - working & CRT TVs)
- Eyeglasses & Hearing Aids – Eyeglass Retailers & Lions Club
- Mattresses & Box Springs – Kerns Mattress Outlet
- Textiles – Home Sweet Home Ministries (white drop boxes for worn out textiles) & Mission Mart, Goodwill or Advocate BroMenn Thrift Shop (usable items)
- Corks – Jesse’s Grill (inside Marriott)
- Terracycle – St Luke’s Union Church (24 hours) & Common Ground Grocery
- Batteries – Batteries Plus Bulbs & Interstate Batteries (sometimes a fee is charged)



The McLean County Landfill is reaching capacity, so it is more important than ever that we reduce waste. Remember, the Ecology Action Center is here to help!

Holiday Green Ideas

Christmas Lights & Electronics — Town of Normal Public Works will recycle old lights & electronics. Using LED lights with timers will reduce the added energy expense of holiday lighting.

Wrapping Paper—Most wrapping paper and boxes are recyclable. Reuse gift boxes & bags. Using newspapers or old maps or other paper items you typically have at home is an alternative to wrapping paper.

Christmas Tree— Both the City of Bloomington & the Town of Normal will pick-up your tree from the curb and recycle it. Please make sure all decorations (including icicle finel) are removed.

Donating— Encourage the youngsters in our lives to get into the spirit of the season by donating some of their old toys after they get new ones.

Disposables— speak up and speak out against paper plates, plastic cups and plastic utensils at the family gathering. Enjoy some family bonding time with your hands in the soapy water.

EAC Welcomes Melanie L. Ziomek as Executive Assistant



Melanie joined the EAC in August; she has extensive administrative experience and will use it in her new position. Melanie has worked with the EAC at many of their events throughout the years. At the recycling events she represents Terracycle and collects items to be shipped to them. She has worked with Terracycle since 2011. There are now 3 drop-off sites in Bloomington and the site at St. Luke Union Church is open 24 hours. Besides overseeing Terracycle sites, she

decided to get solar panels for her house through the solar group buy program. Once installed, she’ll be able to cover 95% of her electric usage with the solar panels. Even though she is receiving tremendous savings by going solar, it also helps reduce her impact on the environment.

Meet Lacey Monterastelli, Program Coordinator



Lacey joined the EAC in September of 2016. Her efforts are focused on updating the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, overseeing the Radon Program and providing assistance with solid waste planning. Lacey graduated from Illinois State University with a degree in Environmental Health and is a Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS). She spent the last several years living in Alaska, where she worked for the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) as an Environmental Health Consultant and focused on conducting non-regulatory surveys of Tribal landfills, water plants, sewer systems and health clinics. In her last year at ANTHC she switched her focus to air quality and started managing Tribal Air Quality Projects throughout the state of Alaska. When Lacey is not working, she enjoys playing outdoors with her husband, step-daughter, and their Husky, Nova.

Wild Ones Grant Opportunities

Wild Ones is a national not-for-profit organization that aims to educate the public about the use of native plants for landscaping and restoration purposes. The Illinois Prairie Chapter of Wild Ones is located in Bloomington/Normal and presents monthly programs, holds an annual plant sale, and hosts field trips and garden tours. Members help support local native gardens and are available for presentations about native plants.

The Illinois Prairie chapter of Wild Ones will be accepting applications for its Forever Wild Grant Program beginning January 15, 2017. The grant application and instructions are now available for download at <http://illinoisprairie.wildones.org/grants/>. For this grant cycle, grants will be awarded for the purchase of native plants only (not seeds) for projects that establish, preserve or restore native plantings.



Eligible projects must:

- Be sponsored by an eligible not-for-profit organization: School, House of Worship, Nature Center, Govt. organization or other non-profit.
- Support the Wild Ones mission
- Be located on an approved site in one of the eligible counties (see website)
- Demonstrate a reasonable chance of success
- Use native plants appropriate to the local ecosystem
- Serve to educate the public about the beauty and value of native plants

Grants of up to \$500 will be awarded to successful applicants. The deadline is February 15, 2017.

Larissa Armstrong Promoted to Full-time



Many of our members might already be familiar with Larissa, she started working for the EAC in the fall of 2010 on a part-time basis. She's provided assistance over the years with a wide variety of programs from special events to our Solar Bloomington-Normal program. Starting in November, Larissa transitioned to full-time and now coordinates the BN Energy Bright program, Yard Smart, and the Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo. Larissa studied the complex global implications of environmental issues in her Master's program at Rutgers University. As a Bloomington-Normal native (a "townie"), she loves that her work keeps her active in the community and she can use her knowledge and passion to help make Bloomington-Normal a healthy and sustainable place to live.

Please Support Climate Ride Death Valley

In 2016 three “firsts” of note occurred:

- Atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide reached a new threshold, never dropping below 400ppm at any time over the course of the year; this is the first time this has ever happened during the human existence.
- Average global temperatures broke new records.
- The first **American** climate refugees began their resettlement from Isle De Jean Charles, Louisiana to higher ground.



The impacts of climate change are just beginning and much needs to be done to address the issue. However, the new administration in Washington DC is very likely to reduce or completely repeal any current climate programs on the national scale, and worse yet, might increase carbon emissions through renewed emphasis on coal and oil extraction. This makes action on the local and state level that much more critical over the next few years.

The Ecology Action Center is working to do its part, educating local residents on ways to reduce one’s footprint. But did you know that that EAC is also working to quantify our local greenhouse gas emissions? The current GHG inventory will be followed by a community-wide strategic planning process to develop a blueprint for actions to reduce those greenhouse gases and other air emissions. But these efforts take time and financial resources to bring them to fruition.

You can help by supporting local cyclists Kevin Loseke and Michael Brown as they bicycle 250 miles across Death Valley in February 2017 as part of **Climate Ride** to raise awareness of climate change and raise funds for the Ecology Action Center. Climate Ride is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that organizes charitable events to raise awareness and support

sustainability, active transportation, and environmental causes. Climate Ride events support a collection of beneficiary organizations including the Ecology Action Center and Illinois Green Economy Network that are working to engage citizens in the possibility of a green economy, educate the public about the interconnected web of environmental issues related to the climate crisis, mobilize government and businesses to enact sound energy policies that promote renewables, and raise the profile of green transportation.

Please support the EAC’s climate efforts through a tax-deductible contribution to Climate Ride at ecologyactioncenter.org/climateride.

NOTE: *If you are interested in riding and representing the EAC in this or other upcoming Climate Ride events, please contact Michael Brown at mbrown@ecologyactioncenter.org.*





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