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## 2012 Annual Report



Ecology Action Center  
202 W College Avenue  
Normal, Illinois 61761

[www.ecologyactioncenter.org](http://www.ecologyactioncenter.org)





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## From the Desk of the Executive Director

What a great year! We set our targets high for 2012 and we hit mostly bull's-eyes! I feel privileged to be working with such a hard working staff, board, and volunteers who helped us accomplish everything we did this past year. Let me share a few highlights with you:

In response to a pressing local need, the EAC raised \$150,000 with the generous support of hundreds of local residents, businesses, municipalities and organizations to hold the first locally funded **Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection** event in our community. 2000 cars from nearly 3000 local households brought 161,000 pounds of hazardous materials and electronics.

One of the major fundraisers that helped pay the bills for the HHW Collection event was the first annual **We Care Twin Cities Half Marathon**. The Ecology Action Center was proud to partner with a team of dedicated individuals for the race, which drew 700 runners and raised over \$13,000 for HHW!

The annual **Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo**, held in partnership with Illinois Wesleyan University, went *zero waste* to demonstrate how simple choices can have significant consequences. There were 4,000 participants, but only 20 pounds of trash was landfilled —all other solid waste was either avoided through careful planning, substituted with reusables, recycled, or composted!

Attendance at the second annual **America Recycles Day MEGA Recycling Event** was double that of the 2011 event; 700 households participated; 43,000 pounds of materials that would otherwise have been landfilled were recycled. We are grateful for partnerships with Home Sweet Home Ministries and other local organizations and businesses that help us to have such an impact.

The EAC's visibility increased tremendously in 2012, especially with our efforts to raise funds to hold the HHW Collection event. Between school programs, special events, newsletters, media stories, workshops, community presentations, we made **contact with local residents more than 700,000 times** in 2012!

As if all this wasn't enough, our friends and partners gave us enough positive reviews on GreatNonProfits.org to garner an award as a *Top-Rated Nonprofit of 2012*.

Thank you all for your ongoing support which made 2012 such a successful year — let's top it in 2013!

Michael Brown



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## McLean County Solid Waste Program

*The Ecology Action Center acts as the solid waste agency for McLean County and Bloomington-Normal, providing solid waste planning and education services to McLean County, the City of Bloomington, and the Town of Normal. The EAC's various initiatives are aimed at increasing recycling and reducing solid waste to help fulfill the Illinois Solid Waste Planning and Recycling Act requirements.*

### Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection

EAC staff coordinated the first locally funded Household Hazardous Waste Collection event, raising over \$167,000 in funds and in-kind contributions from local municipalities, businesses, individuals, and churches. We hired a hazardous waste contractor, recruited and coordinated 80 volunteers who worked 350 hours, and facilitated the entry of 2000 cars; 161,000 pounds of household hazardous wastes and electronics were safely disposed.

EAC distributed a handout outlining local options for safe disposal of some HHW items as well as instructions on how to dispose of latex paint. This handout was also posted on the EAC website for public access.

EAC press releases resulted in extensive media coverage of the HHW fundraising campaign and Collection event. WGLT's Uncommon Knowledge focused on HHW in two episodes. Paid advertisements and media sponsors—Radio Bloomington, WGLT, Bloomington Pantagraph, and Connoisseur Media—allowed the EAC to reach thousands of local residents.

The EAC sent information about the HHW campaign to 7,500 households in McLean County. An email alert went to 995 subscribers, covering HHW fundraising and safe alternatives to hazardous materials. We sent a postcard to 155 households who requested notification by mail.

EAC staff wrote an article on the risks of improper disposal of HHW and EAC's efforts to hold a local HHW Collection event, which was published in *Healthy Cells* magazine, reaching 8,000 readers.

EAC personnel staffed information booths at multiple events, reaching 100 attendees. They also gave presentations on HHW, Electronics Recycling, pharmaceuticals disposal, and related topics to 16 different community groups, reaching 373 individuals.

EAC staff answered a record 384 phone calls about HHW. These one-on-one conversations enabled us to provide extensive answers to specific questions, expand residents' understanding of HHW issues, and encourage participation in the collection event.





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## Solid Waste Coordinator Activities

EAC's Community Solid Waste Coordinator conducted his annual survey of area waste haulers, recyclers, municipalities, and institutions to calculate the county wide municipal solid waste generation rate and recycling rate for 2011. Official rates were reported to the Illinois EPA and announced in a press release, which resulted in news stories on WJBC and the *Pantagraph*. The Solid Waste Coordinator also performed the annual waste audit to determine trends in waste generation and usage of local recycling programs.

The Solid Waste Coordinator updated the McLean County Integrated Solid Waste Plan (ISWP), summarizing solid waste efforts during the past five years for the McLean County community and setting goals and objectives for the next five years. The McLean County Board approved the Five Year Update in September of 2012; the Update was submitted to the Illinois EPA in accordance with the Illinois Solid Waste Planning Act.

When the Town of Normal investigated switching from a drop-off recycling program to curbside single-stream recycling service, EAC staff testified at a Normal Town Council meeting on local demand for curbside recycling, using the information contained in EAC's 2011 Community Recycling Assessment performed by the ISU Stevenson Center. In addition, EAC staff provided information on recycling at a Bloomington City Council meeting.

The Solid Waste Coordinator facilitated the small municipality recycling grants program and the schools recycling program, resulting in \$2,450 awarded to the seven McLean County communities and \$2,800 to seven McLean County Schools.

The Solid Waste Coordinator organized quarterly meetings of the McLean County Solid Waste Technical Advisory Committee and provided follow-up reports to the McLean County Land Use Committee, including a special report on EAC's 2012 HHW Waste effort.

The Solid Waste Coordinator continued to administer and promote non-traditional recycling programs. These included the Compact Fluorescent Lamp (CFL) recycling program, which has 3 drop-off points in Bloomington/Normal, and the Household Battery recycling program with drop-off points at Interstate Batteries, Batteries Plus, and Springfield Electric. 25,279 pounds of batteries were recycled in 2012. The Solid Waste Coordinator also administers the Illinois Plastic Pot Recycling Program in cooperation with YouthBuild McLean County.

The Solid Waste Coordinator, an active member of the statewide Illinois Recycling Association Board of Directors, helped coordinate the annual statewide recycling conference. He gave a presentation on how to plan for zero waste at special events at the annual meeting of the Illinois Counties Solid Waste Management Association.

He assisted the Village of Heyworth in planning their electronics recycling program, explained Illinois State regulations on electronics disposal, and outlined options for properly recycling consumer electronics.



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## **Bloomington Outreach**

EAC educators ran a number of educational programs in Bloomington. The Earth Schools Recycling and Waste Reduction programs were given in 24 Bloomington fourth grade classrooms, reaching 627 students. Garbage Monster programs were given at LaPetite Academy, the Children's Home, and Fox Creek Daisy Scouts, reaching 51 children. Our educators ran food waste reduction and composting programs at the Bloomington Library with 55 participants.

EAC educators participated in 10 Bloomington events, providing presentations or staffing information booths on waste reduction and recycling, reaching 635 individuals. The annual Freecycle Free-For-All at White Oak Park, which encourages reusing materials instead of disposal, had 95 participants. Volunteers from the Multi-Cultural Leadership Program worked with EAC staff, the City of Bloomington, and Midwest Fiber to host the Recycle Fest at Western Avenue Community Center, which attracted 75 participants.

## **Normal Outreach**

EAC educators ran Earth Schools Recycling and Waste Reduction programs in 22 fourth grade classrooms, reaching 589 students. EAC educators partnered with Kingsley Junior High through McLean County COMPACT to visit eight classrooms in giving programs on solid waste and a field trip to Midwest Fiber's single stream sorting facility. Other activities included waste reduction/recycling programs at Mulberry School, the Garbage Monster program at Chesterbrook Academy, library programs on food waste reduction and composting at Normal Library, an information booth at ISU Earth Day and a presentation for ISU student environmental club with a total of 275 participants.

EAC educators staffed information booths in Normal at four major events, reaching 236 people. They also ran waste reduction/recycling programs for four scout groups, reaching 164 scouts.

The 2012 Eco Action Camp, in partnership with Normal Parks and Recreation, focused on solid waste issues. Students toured Midwest Fiber's single stream recycling facility, assisted with Plastic Garden Pot recycling and had waste-free lunches. 12 students enrolled in the five days of solid-waste reduction and recycling related activities.

Community outreach included a Hands-on Composting Workshop. The 4 participants built their own composters and learned how to compost. The annual Freecycle Free-For-All at Anderson Park attracted 120 individuals.

## **McLean County Outreach**

EAC educators gave six Earth Schools Recycling and Waste Reduction presentations in fourth grade classrooms at 4 McLean County schools, reaching 107 students. They gave a presentation to the MECCA Christian School (10 participants) and ran three programs at Heartland Community College, where students recycled plastic garden pots, reaching 100 participants. Library programs at eight McLean County libraries had 240 participants.

The EAC, in partnership with ISU, the Town of Normal, Home Sweet Home Ministries, Recycling Furniture



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for Families, and the Habitat For Humanity ReStore started a semester-end move-out initiative. Students were able to donate items to charity instead of sending them to the landfill.

EAC educators provided information on waste reduction and recycling by staffing information booths and giving presentations to multiple groups in McLean County; 8 events reached 840 individuals.

EAC staff produced four quarterly issues of the EAC paper newsletter, *Ecology Action Center News*, which featured articles on solid waste issues. Each issue went to 250 households; we also made it available as a free download on the EAC website. Two electronic issues of the *Talking Trash* newsletter sent to 106 subscribers focused on solid waste issues. Ten issues of the electronic *EAC Action News*, which were sent to over 900 email addresses, had articles promoting recycling and waste reduction. Issues were also tied to such timely events as HHW, new municipal recycling procedures, mega recycling events, and holiday waste reduction.

EAC promoted recycling at area special events—we loaned recycling containers for a 5K running event in Carlock and the McLean County Fair.

EAC staff coordinated and promoted McFreecycle, a free listserv to exchange materials, which encourages residents to avoid throwing out useable items. 1,623 local users sent nearly 7,500 messages to find homes for no-longer wanted items.

EAC staff maintained online databases with up-to-date listings on local recycling and disposal programs. These listings include county-wide recycling information at [www.ecologyactioncenter.org](http://www.ecologyactioncenter.org), local listings on the nation-wide [www.Earth911.com](http://www.Earth911.com), and submission of local recycling data to the new statewide EcoPoint website hosted by the Illinois Recycling Association.

As the local information center on recycling and waste issues, EAC staff answered a record number of phone inquiries; 254 inquiries were about recycling/waste disposal, 384 about household hazardous waste, and 245 about electronics recycling.

EAC participated in Bloomington-Normal Clean Up Day, removing trash from a 1.6 mile stretch of Sugar Creek from Tipton Park to Audubon Gardens.

The America Recycles Day Mega Recycling Event was held in partnership with IWU in November. 706 households recycled 43,000 pounds of electronics, textiles, light bulbs, batteries and garden pots. We gave each participant a handout on how to recycle these items locally.

We promoted construction and demolition recycling with a video tour of the new Henson Disposal Construction and Demolition Recycling facility, which was shared by social media.

EAC staff used both traditional and social media to increase awareness of solid waste issues—waste reduction, recycling, composting and proper disposal of household hazardous wastes. EAC staff posted 132 messages on its Facebook page and Twitter account; there were 38,663 views of these posts. EAC promoted holiday waste reduction and recycling with press releases and social media; news items appeared in the *Pantagraph* and WGLT. EAC was featured on WGLT's Uncommon Knowledge program with episodes on household hazardous waste, recycling and upcycling.



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## Storm Water Education & Outreach Program

*The Ecology Action Center provides storm water education programming for the City of Bloomington, the Town of Normal, McLean County, and the Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District to assist these organizations in meeting the public education and outreach requirements of their National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Storm Water Management Plans.*

EAC staff raised awareness about storm water runoff pollution with its education programs, presentations, and by staffing information booths at area events. EAC educators presented 57 Clean Water programs to third grade classes at 23 area schools, reaching 1,479 students. They gave four presentations to 115 students on storm water issues at Heartland Community College and ISU.

12 children attended the 5 day EAC's Eco Action camp. This year the focus was on clean water issues; activities included creek exploration, storm drain stenciling, learning about Yard Smart and rain gardens.

EAC educators gave presentations on clean water or staffed information booths at 15 area events that reached 1,236 individuals. As part of its effort to reduce storm water runoff, EAC staff held 8 rain barrel workshops; participants built and installed 79 rain barrels.

We held the Annual Yard Smart Garden Walk in June, showcasing area yards that use practices that reduce pollution of clean water; 65 participants attended. To promote the Yard Smart Walk, EAC staff gave presentations at the Master Gardener's Home Lawn & Garden Day and the State Farm's Cancer Survivor Group and manned information booths at the Fell Arboretum Plant Sale and the David Davis Mansion Glorious Garden Tour, reaching 145 individuals.

The EAC launched the new "mCLEANwater.org" watershed clearinghouse website, which will serve as a resource for residents and decision-makers on clean water issues. EAC staff worked hard on its design, construction, content accumulation, article summaries, and indexing. The site also includes a library of watershed reports and studies and a showcase of successful watershed protection projects. More content will be added to the site on an ongoing basis.

The EAC was a sponsor of an Illinois Prairie Wild Ones presentation by nationally-known author Doug Tallamy about the benefits of





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choosing native plants for landscaping. EAC also provided Yard Smart information at this event, which attracted 100 people.

EAC staff designed clean water interpretive signage, which was installed in a public park in the Village of Hudson near a waterway. The signage emphasizes the importance of reducing storm water runoff pollution. EAC staff and volunteers also weeded the Davis Lodge rain garden.

Other outreach efforts include the ongoing storm drain stenciling. 56 volunteers spent 143 hours painting 295 stormwater inlets. They distributed information about stormwater runoff pollution and how to reduce this pollution to 1,489 homes in Normal and Bloomington. Stormwater runoff awareness advertisements ran on four local radio stations, reaching approximately 130,000 area listeners. Ten issues of the *EAC Action News* sent to 900 email subscribers featured information about clean water issues. Nearly 100 phone inquiries to the EAC concerned storm water issues, rain barrels, and the Yard Smart program.

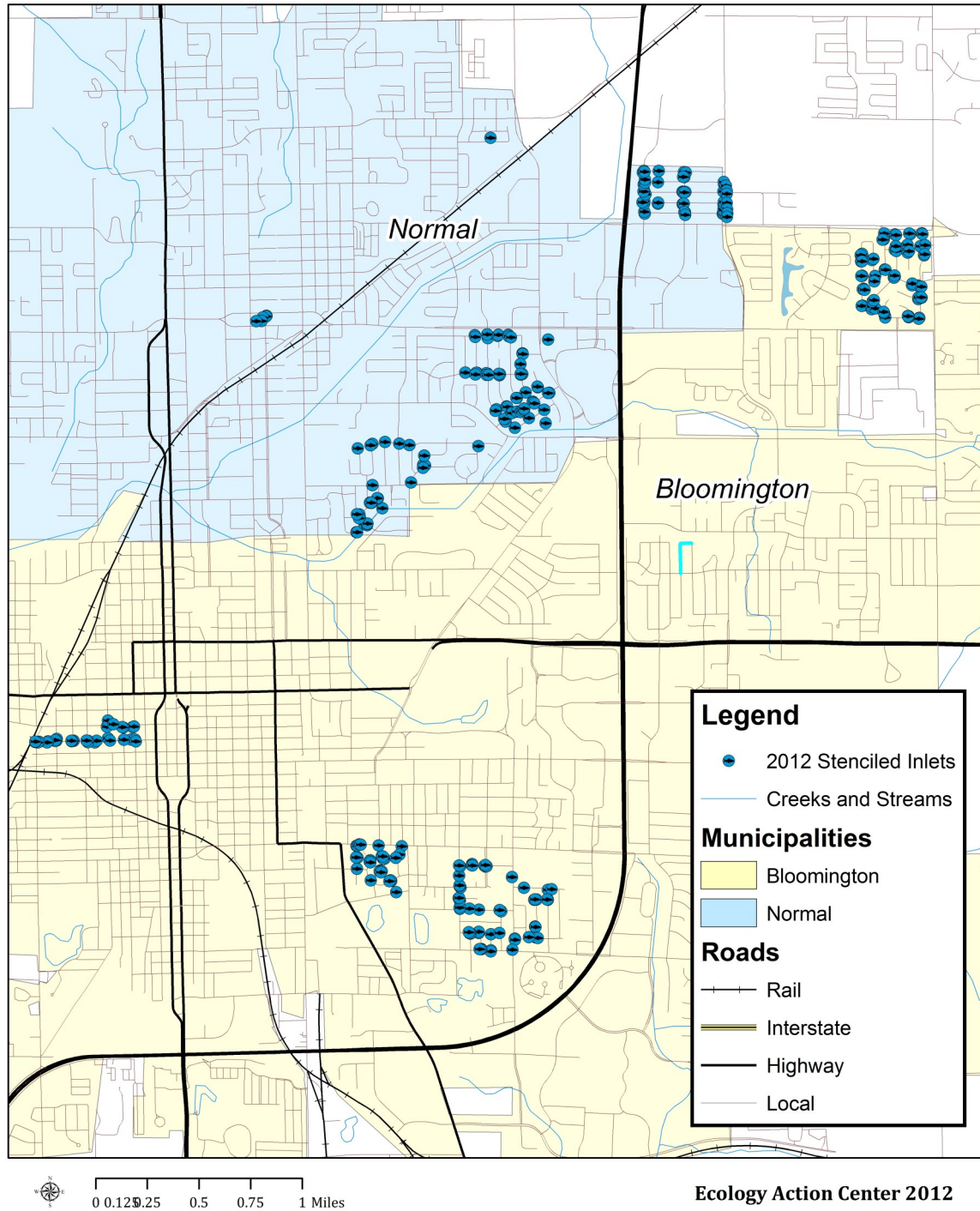
EAC staff served on the Watershed Plan Implementation Committee and chaired the McLean County Greenways Committee.





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## Storm Drain Stenciling 2012





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## Radon Awareness

*The Ecology Action Center coordinates the McLean County Radon Program with funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency through the Illinois Emergency Management Agency. This program seeks to raise awareness of radon and promote radon home testing, mitigation, and post testing.*

The McLean County Radon Program had an outstanding year. The sale of Radon test kits has made it a self-sustaining program; we sold a total of 249 kits in 2012. We also gave free radon test kits to new Habitat for Humanity homeowners.

We raised public awareness about the risks associated with radon in a number of ways. Two public billboards were displayed during January's Radon Action Month and October's Radon Awareness Month. The Radon Program Coordinator held a very successful Radon Booth at the Bloomington-Normal Home Show in March. Members of the McLean County Radon Task Force assisted in staffing the booth, putting in 29 hours. 325 attendees stopped by to ask questions; we sold 43 radon test kits. There was a radon booth at the Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo in April, where we sold 29 test kits and provided information to 63 individuals. The EAC Radon Coordinator staffed a radon information booth, representing McLean County and IEMA, at the annual Public Health Communicable Disease Conference.

The Radon Program Coordinator presented two public information sessions on radon at the Normal Public library with 48 attendees; we sold 42 radon test kits. A volunteer from the radon task force maintained the McLean County Radon website.

To help spread the word about radon issues, EAC sponsored an educational social hour with Bloomington/Normal Association of Realtors in May; 60 realtors attended. There were a number of door prizes, including two free professional radon tests for realtors and a \$100 discount on the radon mitigation system.

The Radon Program Coordinator participated in educational venues, teleconferences and state conferences to stay apprised of Illinois and national laws. She represented the McLean County at the annual American Association of Radon Scientists and Technicians (AARST) conference held in Las Vegas. The Coordinator also participates in monthly teleconferences with IEMA officials, US EPA Region 5 Radon Representatives and other grantees throughout the state. EAC's radon staff also assisted with presentations at the Midwest AARST conference in May and the IEMA sponsored statewide "Radon Networking Day". The McLean County Radon Task Force New discussed radon issues at two meetings, highlighting two new Illinois laws concerning radon.

EAC, in partnership with ISU, coordinated an educational field trip to Matthiessen State Park, where 35 state radon licensees earned continuing education credits; participants rated the experience as outstanding.



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## Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo

*The Ecology Action Center partners with Illinois Wesleyan University Wellness to coordinate the annual Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo (ISLWE). ISLWE is a regional event, free to the public, featuring nearly 100 exhibitors and a dozen workshops promoting healthy lifestyles and a safe environment.*

EAC co-coordinated the 2012 Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo at IWU with IWU's Wellness Office. For the first time, this event was designed to be "zero-waste" -- much of the literature was presented electronically, food service items were washable instead of disposable, and vendors were encouraged to forgo distributing extraneous trinkets. Less than one bag of trash was collected at this event, which had over 4300 participants.



The EAC awarded the annual McLean County Green Awards to recognize and encourage sustainability efforts in the community. The McLean County Waste Reduction and Recycling Award was given to the ISU Student Bio-diesel project. The McLean County World of Difference Award was presented to Sugar Grove Nature Center.

The ISLWE featured the "Renewable Fashion Challenge" to encourage reusing textiles instead of buying new clothes. The Mega-Recycling collected nontraditional recyclables such as CFLs, textiles, electronics, plastic garden pots, from residents.

Other event highlights included free bike maintenance by the West Bloomington Revitalization Project, showcasing three electric cars and a wind-powered Harley Davidson motorcycle, a local food demonstration by Chef Shamon Bell, a presentation on reduction of home energy consumption, and a screening of Sandra Steingraber's *Living Downstream*.



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## Other Activities

The Ecology Action Center acts as an information center and resource for the community on a variety of environmental issues. The EAC promotes sustainable practices aimed at improving the local environment. Membership contributions and donations help support its efforts as well as the growth of new programs.

Beyond its core program areas, the EAC implemented a number of other activities:

EAC staff rebuilt the EAC website from the ground up. The new and improved [ecologyactioncenter.org](http://ecologyactioncenter.org) better integrates social media for sharing information, has user-friendly navigation of content, includes a comprehensive search function, automatically adapts to mobile devices, and is easier to update and modify, making it more versatile for EAC's needs. The **BN Green Events Calendar**, promoting area environmental happenings, is better integrated into the site and now provides for streaming of events to social media feeds such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. A new **BN Green Community** section showcases environmental sites and features, such as an online map of the Constitution Trail, and features the new **BN Green News**, which shares stories on local environmental issues.

EAC also hosted multiple "green" events. The monthly **Green Drinks** is an informal discussion group that focuses on environmental issues. 12-30 people participated each month. The seventh annual **Sustainable Gourmet** fundraiser featured organic wines and hors d'oeuvres from local foods and raised nearly \$3,000 to support EAC's initiatives.

EAC staff, board members, and volunteers helped to coordinate the first ever **We Care Twin Cities Half Marathon**. This event was both fun and a successful fundraiser; the EAC plans to continue to hold an annual race to raise funds for other EAC programs.

As the nation, especially the midwest, endured a severe drought in 2012, thoughts turned to the ramifications of global climate change. EAC staff researched and produced a proposal for a **baseline inventory of greenhouse gas emissions**, which should be implemented in 2013.

EAC reached out to its membership and beyond, keeping the community in the loop on a variety of topics with its *Ecology Action Center News*, and the free electronic *EAC Action News*. Articles covered topics on e-waste, composting, hydraulic fracturing, energy efficiency and home weatherization, municipal aggregation, sustainable transportation, household hazardous waste, zero waste strategies, clean water





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protection, rain barrels, and West Nile Virus. An EAC intern wrote an article for the *EAC Action News* outlining potential issues with hydraulic fracturing, which was reprinted in *Healthy Cells* magazine.

To top off the year, the EAC received an important and thoughtful gift from friends, supporters, partners, and volunteers. GreatNonprofits.org is a website that solicits feedback on nonprofits nationwide. The Ecology Action Center received extremely positive reviews, quickly **earning it a designation as one of GreatNonprofits' Top-Rated Nonprofits of 2012**. Reviewers were generous, thanking the EAC for its efforts, especially about HHW:

*...What started as a simple resource has developed into a partnership that has created greater business opportunities and visibility for our company. Through their various programs, we have partnered to service the recycling needs of our community. Our community should be thankful that we have local leadership promoting environmental responsibility, primarily at the residential level, which has created a groundswell of stewardship in the commercial arena, too...*

*...EAC is an environmental leader that even the local governments rely on to get out the message and to create new opportunities for recycling, energy conservation, clean water, radon mitigation and so much more. It is an honor to volunteer for an organization that does so much.*

*...With the assistance of qualified and committed personnel and a proactive board, the EAC has attained the level of professionalism necessary to provide our community with the information, resources, activities, and services that a 21st Century commitment to environmental concerns demands. I am continually amazed at how the EAC is able to function as a one stop shop for all aspects of environmental education with such meager funding!*

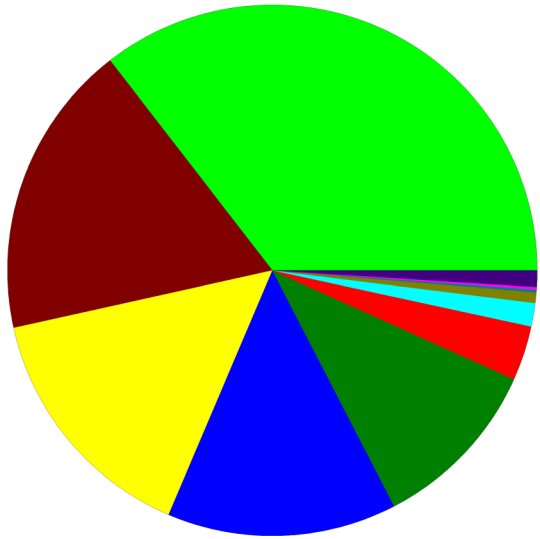
*...The EAC has led the way in the community for expanding sustainability practices and services. They also provide tremendous opportunities to engage students in both research and outreach related to a variety of sustainability efforts. We are so fortunate to have the EAC as a partner in this community, working tirelessly to make our quality of life better every day!*



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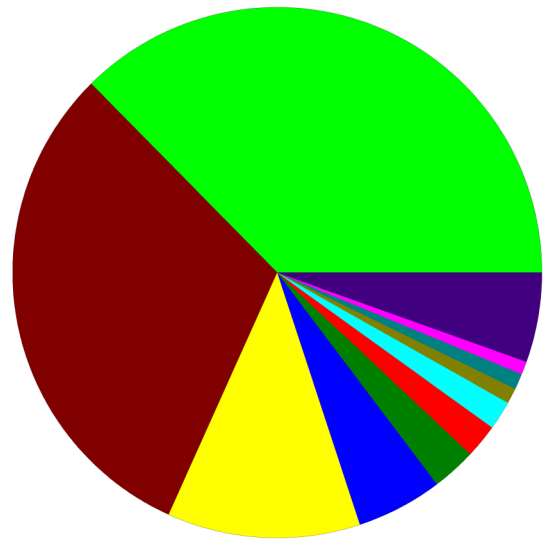
## 2012 Financial Report

Income Summary  
January through December 2012



Program Fees	%35.56
Sponsorships	18.03
Grants	15.16
Contributions Income	14.04
Fundraiser proceeds	10.73
Membership Dues	3.49
Merchandise/Food Sales	1.57
Recycled Commodities	0.72
Interest Income	0.21
Advertisements	0.19
Other	0.28
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$375,510.03</b>

Expense Summary  
January through December 2012



HHW contractor	%37.43
Payroll Expenses	30.96
Supplies	11.87
Battery Program	5.30
Marketing	2.76
Printing and Reproduction	2.22
Professional Fees	1.78
Utilities	1.02
Insurance	0.98
Office Equipment	0.84
Other	4.84
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$353,021.90</b>



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## Board of Directors

Kari Sandhaas—President  
Nancy Armstrong—Treasurer  
Charles Bristow—Secretary  
Robin Weaver—Ex-officio Normal  
George Kutz—Ex-officio Bloomington  
George Gordon—Ex-officio McLean County  
Myra Gordon  
Charlotte Brown  
Carl Teichman  
Laurine Brown  
Carlo Robustelli  
Anand Bhende  
Tim Golliday  
Ken Springer

## Staff

Michael Brown - Executive Director  
Kris Hall - Assistant Director  
Larissa Armstrong - Program Assistant  
Ruth Ann Lipic - Radon Program Coordinator  
Gary Kamplain - Program Assistant  
Sarah Hinch - Administrative Assistant  
Laurie Fuller - Program Assistant