



ECOLOGY NEWS

ACTION CENTER

Volume 18, Issue 2

Summer 2020

BN Green Events

June

Kids Programs:

6/23 10:00 am
Watershed Down
StoryMakers

6/25 10:00 am
The Wonder Ears Book
Club

6/30 10:00 am
Watershed Down
StoryMakers

July

Kids Programs:

7/2 10:00 am
The Wonder Ears Book
Club

7/7 10:00 am
Watershed Down
StoryMakers

7/9 10:00 am
The Wonder Ears Book
Club

7/18 9:00 am
Sugar Creek Stewards
Workday

7/23 6:30pm
Virtual Yard Smart
Garden Walk

Got Rain?

By now we recognize the pattern: heavy rainfall about the time we're ready to plant the garden, and then an about-face just when it needs to be watered. How does so much water manage to hang in the air all summer, yet so little of it seems to fall to the ground?

As an EAC member, you are probably aware of the benefits of collecting rain water for the garden or landscaping, and the significant service each rain barrel performs in reducing the load of debris and other pollutants swept into our waterways during major runoff events.

People often think one rain barrel is more or less the same as the next, but a great deal of thought has gone into the EAC rain barrel design. EAC rain barrels are reclaimed from locally discarded food-grade containers, and EAC staff works diligently to secure fair prices on these barrels. Once barrels are procured, the cleaning process is extensive, time-consuming, and of course, environmentally safe! An experienced EAC staff member



developed our durable yet economical design, with features like low spigot placement to minimize stagnant water, and a top-screen that is effective at keeping debris out of the rain barrel, preventing mosquitos from accessing the water, and easy to remove for cleaning using a simple paint can opener. At 55 gallons, that is almost 30 watering cans of water available for your garden.

Out of an abundance of caution, the EAC is not currently offering our do-it-yourself rain barrel building workshops, but pre-made barrels are available for purchase on our website! We waived local delivery fees (this also applies to compost bins), and our staff provides best practice information for rain barrel installation, usage, and winter storage. Now is a great time to add a rain barrel to your home, and encourage friends and neighbors to try one.

Visit our online store at ecologyactioncenter.org, or call us at 309-454-3169.

Online Programs for Kids

The EAC launched two new programs for kids in the elementary school age group last month, and so far they've been a big hit with participants! The Wonder Ears Book Club couples a traditional read-aloud with book-club style group discussion of the book. Why did the goldfish feel angry about that litter? What could you say if this happened while you were playing ball with your friends?



Perhaps you remember the "Choose-your-own-adventure" book series, written for youth a few decades ago? If so, you have some idea how Watershed Down StoryMakers works. StoryMakers is a live small group experience. We bring the basic storyline, but the kids make decisions (should we go up or down the ladder?), embellish the story (you say the creature who shared their flashlight is... a mermaid? Ok, what will we say to our new friend the mermaid?), and work together to solve problems. Oops, did we just accidentally learn a lesson about preserving the environment?

We designed these programs to be interactive and personal, and encourage kids to share their own ideas and experiences. We have been surprised and delighted by their thoughtful statements and powerful actions as we discuss and create together. We hope many more kids will be able to take advantage of these programs this summer. Please help us spread the word! Watershed Down StoryMakers is every Tuesday morning at 10:00 a.m. and the Wonder Ears Book Club is offered Thursdays at 10:00 a.m. Register in the BN Green Events section of ecologyactioncenter.org.

Environmental Justice

The Ecology Action Center condemns the inordinate use of force against people of color across the country. The EAC recognizes the disproportionate impact of pollution and other environmental problems on communities of color due to systemic racism. The Ecology Action Center believes that black lives matter and pledges to actively partner with our local communities of color to address environmental issues.

After several productive conversations, the EAC staff and board have agreed we need to work harder to address issues of environmental justice in our community. The Environmental Protection Agency defines the optimized state of environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." Communities most impacted by environmental harms and risks are typically referred to as environmental justice (EJ) communities. EJ communities are identified as areas where there is a disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards, and increased vulnerability to said hazards. EJ communities are often predominantly low-income areas, and areas with larger minority and indigenous populations. In EJ communities, multiple factors, including environmental and socio-economic stressors act cumulatively to affect health and the environment and contribute to persistent environmental health disparities.

The EAC recognizes that systemic racism contributes to disparities in the effects of environmental degradation, and is committed to do more to address environmental justice in our community.

Virtual Energy Efficiency Consultations

We are all spending a lot more time at home during the pandemic. Have you noticed areas in your home that might not be very energy efficient? While the EAC is not conducting home energy audits due to current social distancing requirements, we are offering online energy efficiency consultations for Bloomington-Normal residents. We can assess your efficiency concerns via emailed pictures and questions, or by reaching out to schedule a virtual walk-through if needed and technology allows. Bring us your energy efficiency questions, and don't let more time spent at home mean higher energy bills! Contact Larissa Armstrong at larstrong@ecologyactioncenter.org or 309-454-3169 x. 15.



Maybe you want to make energy efficiency improvements in your home but you are not sure what to look for or where to start. The EAC is here to help! Attend an upcoming BN Energy Bright DIY Audit online class and let Larissa walk through her home energy audit steps with you. After the class, conduct your own home energy audit, and then schedule a follow-up with Larissa for improvement tips or questions regarding any inefficiencies you discovered! Classes start the week of June 29. Check the BN Green Events page on the EAC website and social media to register! Hope to see you there!

A Time for Transitions



As most of you receive this newsletter, we will be saying our goodbyes to staff member Molly McCready, who is moving out of state after two and a half years of dedicated service to the Ecology Action Center and our community. As the face of the EAC in classrooms across the community, Molly has helped a new generation of youth learn the importance of reducing waste and recycling properly, the finite nature of our water supplies, and how critical it is that we do not take these things for granted. Behind the scenes, she has been a great asset in the EAC's solid waste program, coordinating much of the technical work in compiling data and communications with smaller municipalities, waste haulers, and other stakeholders. As the only millennial on staff, she has brought a new perspective to the EAC, even if the rest of us did have to explain the "old school" cultural references behind our jokes. We wish her well in her new endeavors and hope she remembers to keep in touch when she is back in the area visiting

her family.

Jen Gravley is our new full time Program Coordinator, taking over most of Molly's roles at the EAC. Jen has a very strong science background, with work in ecological modeling, sustainable agriculture, veterinary medicine and human health. She recognizes environmental stewardship as a key to sustainable health and wellness, and has spent much of the last decade teaching and working with the agricultural community to advance human and animal well-being along with sustainability practices. We are excited to welcome her to the EAC team, and if you have young children we encourage you to meet Jen virtually in one of our online programs for kids.





202 W. College Ave.
Normal, IL 61761

ecologyactioncenter.org
309-454-3169



Printed on Recycled, Chlorine-Free Paper, Of Course!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Staff

Board of Directors 2019–2020

Michael Brown
Executive Director

Larissa Armstrong
Assistant Director

Jen Gravley
Program Coordinator

Gary Kamplain
Program Assistant

Sara Keene
Program Coordinator

Angela Bossard
Administrative Assistant

Molly McCready
Program Assistant

Eric Marshall
Program Assistant

Carl Teichman
President

Tim Golliday
Past President

Mike O'Grady
Vice President

Nancy Armstrong
Treasurer

Charles Bristow
Secretary

Wayne Aldrich
Ex-officio Normal

Ben Ryburn
Ex-officio Bloomington

George Gordon
Ex-officio McLean County

Myra Gordon

Charlotte Brown

Laurine Brown

Steve Kowalski

Joan Brehm

Julie Emig

Kari Sandhaas

Jay Ivers

Vince Allen

Elisabeth Reed

