



# ECOLOGY ACTION CENTER NEWS

Volume 18, Issue 4

Winter 2020

## BN GREEN EVENTS

**Sugar Creek Stewards Workday**  
Saturday, January 16  
9:00am—noon

## NEW EAC INITIATIVES



**BNCOMMUNITY COMPOSTING.ORG**



**TREE CORPS**  
TREE-CORPS.ORG

## OFFICE UPDATES

- Open by appointment only
- Check out our new online store
- New mailing address:

**Ecology Action Center**  
PO Box 97  
Normal, IL 61761

## Resolve to Be Energy Efficient

### Use LED Holiday Lights

Replace traditional string lights with LED (light-emitting diode) strands instead. The cost of running them is around 90% less than traditional lights! Buy them now while they are on sale after the holidays!

### Reduce Usage

Setting automatic timers on your decorative lights will prevent them from being left on for extended periods of time. You can use timers on indoor lamps too. Again, likely on sale now that Christmas has passed!



**BN ENERGY BRIGHT**

[BNenergyBright.org](http://BNenergyBright.org)

### Use a Programmable Thermostat

Set your thermostat back several degrees before bed. A general rule of thumb is that each degree of setback over an eight-hour period saves 1% of that system's energy use. These savings will be extra apparent now while many of us are working from home and leaving the house temperature higher for most of the day.

### Get a Virtual Energy Efficiency Consultation

The EAC is not currently conducting in-home energy audits out of an abundance of caution for the safety of staff and our community, but we are offering FREE online energy efficiency consultations for Bloomington-Normal residents. We can assess your efficiency concerns via emailed pictures, or by scheduling a virtual walk-through via zoom (this works best using if the homeowner uses Zoom on a smart phone or tablet) if technology allows. Let us help you save some energy and some money, and give you some DIY efficiency tips you can tackle while you're at home. Contact Larissa Armstrong at [larstrong@ecologyactioncenter.org](mailto:larstrong@ecologyactioncenter.org) or 309-454-3169 x. 15 to make an appointment.

**EcoAction:** Make time to make energy efficiency improvements—they are a key strategy to reducing climate changing greenhouse gas emissions while also saving you money.

## Resolve to Recycle Right

Recycling helps minimize waste and puts high-quality, usable materials where they belong: back in the items we depend on every day. Correction: recycling *\*right\** does these things. But what happens when we miss the mark?

Clean and dry metal and glass containers, and paper products can be recycled curbside. Clean and dry plastic bottles, tubs, jugs and jars (ONLY) are also recyclable in our local collection services. But when other plastic items are tossed into the mix simply because they are marked with resin codes (that recycle symbol with a number in it, often mistakenly called “recycling codes”), it reduces the quality of the mixed material, which means it doesn't get used the way it should.

### Wishful Recycling

When items that can't be recycled here get mixed in with items that can, it's called **contamination**. At best, contamination increases the amount of time and effort workers spend sorting our recyclables, making recycling unnecessarily expensive. At worst, contamination can clog the machinery that sorts those materials. This can cause a shutdown while those clogs are removed. It can also damage equipment, or even injure a worker.

We can all agree that it's better to recycle more, but “wishful recycling” does just the opposite. Contamination increases costs and decreases the value of the recycled material. Despite our best intentions, wishful recycling means less recycled products on the market, and it hinders our progress toward more and better recycling.

Avoid putting contaminants in your recycling cart! Go to **RecycleBN.org** to find out how to properly dispose of these items, and any others you're not sure about.

- Plastic bags or film (special drop-off)
- Carryout containers (trash)
- Bulky items (varies)
- Tanglers such as clothes hangers, cord, or chain (varies)
- Clothing, shoes, and textiles (donate)
- Food (see BNcommunityComposting.org)
- Liquids, diapers (trash)
- Batteries, needles (special drop-off)
- Shredded paper (special recycling instructions)

Remember: **if in doubt, throw it out!** While it's frustrating to toss some items in the trash, the good news is that more companies than ever before are working to scale up and recycle better. As these companies continue to reduce costs and improve the quality of materials produced, they open doors to opportunities for innovation, better equipment, and more recycling overall. By recycling right, we can help keep workers safe and ensure our recycling options continue to grow.

Over the past few decades, McLean County has consistently been ahead of the curve with innovative initiatives and successful recycling programs. Our recycling rate remains well above the national average. But to continue that trend, we must reduce our contamination rates. As we wave goodbye to 2020, let's also say goodbye to “wishful recycling”, and start the new year with a resolution to recycle right.

**EcoAction:** Don't fake it on recycling—if you aren't sure whether or not something is recyclable, ask us. Contamination costs money and weakens recycling programs across the nation.



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## Community Composting Arrives in McLean County!

You want to compost but don't want to deal with the mess? You want to use compostable food packaging from your favorite local restaurant but know it's not compostable in a backyard compost pile? Maybe you live in an apartment and don't have a yard for a compost pile. Now there's a solution!

The Ecology Action Center, in partnership with Better Earth Compost Logistics is offering an easy to use residential composting service available through a unique drop-off program using a kiosk with key-card access. Residents can sign up for the service through the purchase of a Composting Starter Kit for \$20.99. The Starter Kit includes a 5-gallon bucket, educational materials, a 30-pack of compostable liners, and your personal kiosk access card. When you run out of liners, you can purchase a refill for \$16.50 which includes another 30 liners and covers composting costs.

The Community Composting Kiosk is located at Normandy Village in Normal and is accessible 24 hours a day. This kiosk has been made possible by private donations as well as sponsorship by **Normandy Village, Zimmerman and Armstrong Investment Advisors, and Myra and George Gordon.**

Keep in mind, composting is the ONLY truly sustainable means to manage organic waste. Anything composed of natural materials that is put in the landfill cannot properly decompose due to the absence of oxygen. So instead, these materials slowly break down over many years through an anaerobic (oxygen-deprived) process that generates methane, a climate-changing greenhouse gas that is 20 times as potent as carbon dioxide. In order to properly recycle the valuable nutrients in natural materials, we need to compost as much as we can. Proper composting happens in an aerobic, or oxygen-rich environment which prevents the generation of methane (which also means no stinky odors!)

**EcoAction:** Learn more and purchase your starter kit online at [BNcommunityComposting.org](https://BNcommunityComposting.org).



**BNCOMMUNITY  
COMPOSTING.ORG**



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## Winterize Your Rain Barrel!

It takes just a few minutes to ensure your EAC rain barrel is ready for winter.

1. Empty the barrel, then use a paint can opener or flat screwdriver to carefully remove the screen. Take care not to bend the metal rim.
2. Brush or wipe down the inside to remove any gravel that washed down from your shingles, or other fine debris that may have passed through the screen.
3. Disconnect the overflow hose and place it inside the barrel for storage (don't forget where you put it!).
4. Leave the spigot open so any water that enters or condenses inside can drain.
5. If you store the barrel in place, use a weight such as a concrete block over the screen to keep water out and keep the barrel from blowing away.
6. Don't forget to reconfigure your downspout, either by switching or removing the diverter, or replacing the original downspout depending on your installation setup.

That's it – your rain barrel is ready for a long winter's nap!



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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