

MCLEAN COUNTY SOLID WASTE PROGRAM 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



THE ECOLOGY ACTION CENTER HAS COMPLETED THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN FULFILLMENT OF THE SOLID WASTE AND WASTE REDUCTION EDUCATION PROGRAM AGREEMENT OF JANUARY 1, 2023.

LEADING INDICATORS: SUMMARY OF PROGRESS¹

Goal: Visit **70%** of eligible classrooms in McLean County, Bloomington, and Normal for elementary school recycling and waste reduction education programs. Reaching this target means directly engaging with approximately 1,500 students.

- Year to date: EAC delivered our 4th grade recycling program to 53 classrooms, reaching 1,124 students. This represents 62% of our annual goal.² The EAC had 9 more classrooms scheduled but had to reschedule to 2024 due to a staff injury.

**2023 TOTAL REACH:
460,340 INTERACTIONS**
DIRECT (PROGRAMS, EVENTS, PHONE INQUIRIES): 3,707
MEDIA (NEWSPAPER, RADIO, SOCIAL MEDIA, WEB): 456,633

Goal: Visit **60%** of public libraries within McLean County, Bloomington and Normal and provide a summer reading program on recycling and waste reduction topics. Reaching this target means directly engaging with approximately 300 library patrons.³

- Year to date: 15 programs, presented to 352 people. This represents 100% of libraries which exceeds our annual goal.

Goal: Provide recycling and waste reduction presentations for **25** local groups or approximately 750 individuals including civic groups, scouts, preschools, non-target school groups, university classes.⁴

- Year to date: 29 programs, presented to 503 people, which exceeds our annual goal.

Goal: Promote recycling and sustainable practices to direct audiences utilizing social media channels including Facebook, X (Twitter), LinkedIn, and YouTube with a target of **30,000** interactions annually.

- Year to date: Our year to date total interactions from social media is 132,031 which surpasses our annual goal.

Goal: Provide and promote comprehensive online resources on recycling and waste disposal for Bloomington, Normal, and McLean County with a target of **12,000** visits to these pages annually.

- Year to date: The year to date total of visits to our online resources is 43,235 visits, which exceeds our annual goal.

¹ The totals below represent Year-To-Date numbers. Specific details of this year's activities follow in other sections of this report.

² There are 86 Fourth grade classrooms in McLean County, which includes all public and private schools. One school declined as the program did not meet curriculum needs and two schools scheduled for the spring 2024 semester.

³ There are 15 local libraries within McLean County.

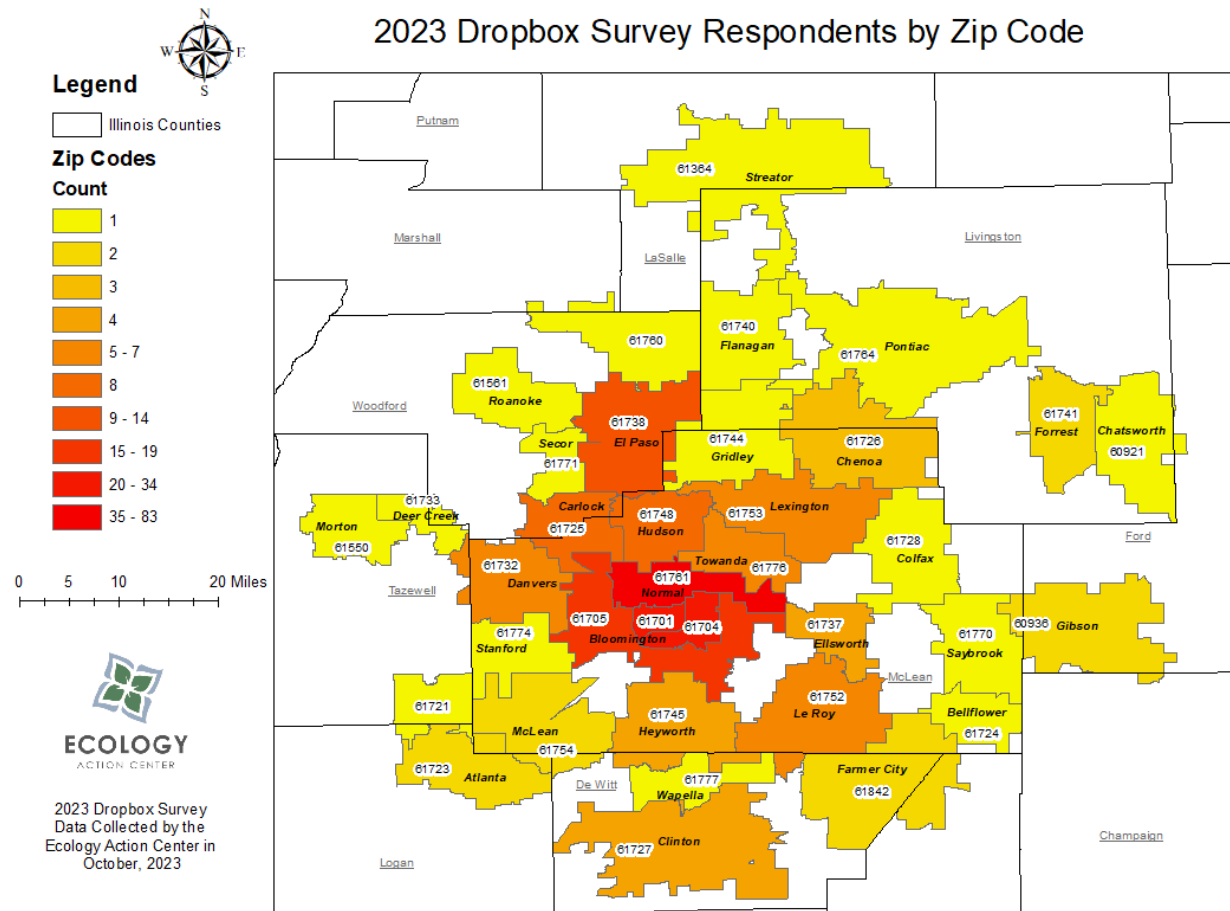
⁴ In practice, the EAC provides these programs for nearly 100% of those requesting the services.

DROPBOX USER SURVEY

The 2023 Dropbox User Survey took place from October 16 – October 21 during which time 267 users were surveyed while they were recycling at one of the four dropbox locations. Volunteers and EAC staff administered the survey during different time slots throughout the week using a google form on personal cell phones.

Walmart continues to be the most utilized location with 69% of 2023 users recycling at that location. Users over the age of 40 continue to make up the largest age group with 76% of total users falling into that category. More than half (63%) of users were multitasking by running other errands and nearly all (90%) of the material being recycled came from a residential source while 7% came from a business and 3% came from both. 55% of dropbox users stated that they also have curbside recycling collection where they live and 73% of those users utilize that service in addition to the dropboxes.

Dropbox visitors represented 31 municipalities from 7 different counties. McLean County represents 86% of all users. Within McLean County, the Town of Normal represents 37% of users, the City of Bloomington represents 28%, and the remaining 37% come from other municipalities within McLean County including unincorporated areas of Bloomington-Normal. The top municipalities within McLean County outside of Bloomington-Normal using the recycling dropboxes are Hudson (13%), Carlock (11%), LeRoy (11%), and Lexington (11%). Most users visit the sites for recycling one a week or twice a month (27% for both) and 24% visit once a month.



COUNTY WASTE GENERATION & RECYCLING RATE

McLean County's recycle rate continues to steadily increase. While the waste generated in McLean County in 2022 grew, the amount recycled grew even more to a total of 46.85%. The county is still making progress towards its recycling rate goal of 50% set in the 20-year solid waste management plan. Although this goal has yet to be met, McLean County is well ahead of the 32.1% national recycling average.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total MSW Recycled (tons)	83,335	88,459	94,804	88,330	76,487	82,205	97,643
Total MSW Landfilled (tons)	120,815	124,364	109,467	104,772	104,919	105,442	112,264
Total Municipal Solid Waste Generated (tons)	204,150	211,230	204,271	193,102	181,406	187,647	209,907
Recycling Rate	40.8%	41.9%	46.4%	45.7%	42.16%	43.8%	46.85%

Contributors to the county's recycling rate include successful recycling and waste diversion goals by large corporations and residential recycling accessibility. The EAC recognizes that large waste generators make significant efforts to recycle which helps keep the recycle rate steady and indicates deliberate efforts to address recycling on their part. Some materials that saw a significant increase in 2022 include lithium-ion batteries and lumber and pallets. Other items with large increases that were not previously reported include tempered glass and rigid plastics. Along with curbside recycling offered in both Bloomington and Normal and some other smaller municipalities in the county, there are four community recycling drop off locations open to anyone and available 24 hours a day. These locations include; Heartland Community College, the Jewel Osco on Cottage, the Walmart on Greenbriar, and a relocation of the Chiddix Jr High drop off to the Crossroads Center in Bloomington coming in early July. The amount of single stream recycling collected in McLean County in 2022 rose by 14.7%.

Some areas that saw a decrease in recycling were organics, such as brush collected by the town and city, and tube fluorescent light bulbs. The large ice storm of 2021 caused a huge fluctuation in the amount of brush recycled due to downed trees and limbs during that year so as a result, the number has significantly decreased in 2022. Linear or tube fluorescent and compact fluorescent (CFL) light bulbs contain a small amount of mercury and need to be recycled rather than thrown away. The recycling of these bulbs decreased 34% in 2022 compared to 2021. This is likely due to the increased conversion to LED bulbs or failing to recycle.

MCLEAN COUNTY HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION

- The EAC successfully held an Illinois EPA funded Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event on September 23, 2023 at Heartland Community College.
- 917 cars passed through the event, bringing waste from an estimated 1,289 households from 12 different Illinois counties.
- The event ran seamlessly, with no significant backups or delays, and no issues with commercial or unaccepted wastes. 99% of those participating made an appointment as is required for the event.
- 15,727 gallons of hazardous waste materials were collected for safe disposal.
- 26 volunteers worked over 100 hours to help EAC staff set-up, work the event, and tear everything back down at the end of the day.



SOLID WASTE COORDINATOR ACTIVITIES

Pollution Control Facility Siting Process

On August 18, 2023, Lakeshore Recycling Systems (LRS) filed an application for the site approval of a waste transfer station to be located at Henson Disposal in Bloomington. In order to be approved by local government, the applicant must submit an application that demonstrates compliance with nine criteria. As the Solid Waste Agency for McLean County, the Ecology Action Center is the staff siting review coordinator for the PCF siting process.

- Led a pre-review of the application which included coordinating meetings and setting deadlines for comments from other county agencies involved in the process.
- Researched and drafted new county code to include the use of a hearing officer, an attorney who presides over the public hearing and provides their expertise to the hearing process.
 - Searched for and hired a hearing officer.
 - Organized and scheduled meetings with the hearing officer.
- Distributed copies of the application and held interdepartmental meetings.
- Continually managed communications between parties, the hearing officer, and the county.
- Completed an initial review of the application and wrote a preliminary report with comments and concerns.
 - Set deadlines for preliminary staff reports from other department, collected staff reports and sent them to the County Clerk to be filed stamped and added to the public file.
- Composed a letter to the applicant with concerns uncovered through a FOIA request.
- Composed a notice to the applicant and a public hearing notice of the date and time of the public hearing.
 - Published the notice multiple times in the Pantagraph per county code requirements.

- Created a sign up system for participation in the public hearing as well as detailed instructions on submitting public comment.
- Collected and posted over 200 public comments.
- Maintained webpages on the EAC website as the online resource for the entire PCF process.
- Compiled all public documents and comments for the pollution control board hearing committee meeting and again for the final committee meeting.
- Participated in the public hearing as the McLean County Solid Waste Coordinator.
- Submitted a final staff report based on evidence presented during the hearing.
 - Set deadlines and collected other final staff reports from county staff and published them on the EAC website.

Other Activities

- Initiated a Household Hazardous Waste Feasibility Study.
- Surveyed area waste haulers, recyclers, municipalities, and institutions for the annual waste and recycling rate.
- Extensive planning and preparation for the 2023 McLean County Household Hazardous Waste Collection in partnership with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.
- Coordinated the relocation of one of the residential recycling drop-offs from Chiddix Jr High to the Crossroads Center.
- Designed and installed recycling signage at the new Crossroads Center Recycling Drop-off and at the old location at Chiddix Jr High.
- Made continual updates to the Recycle Coach Application, Recycling Guidelines handout and Household Hazardous Waste handout.
- Planned and coordinated the 2023 Dropbox Survey.
- Hosted the first Solid Waste Advisory Committee meeting of 2023

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

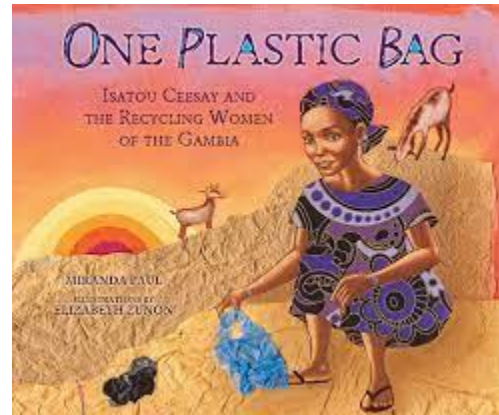
Fourth Grade Recycling and Waste Reduction Education Programs

- Normal
 - Oakland Elementary School (2 classrooms, 48 students)
 - Epiphany Catholic School (2 classrooms, 34 students)
 - Sugar Creek Elementary School (2 classrooms, 38 students)
 - Prairieland Elementary School (3 classrooms, 90 students)
 - Colleen Hoose Elementary School (3 classrooms, 69 students)
 - Thomas Metcalf School (2 classrooms, 24 students)
 - Oakdale Elementary School (3 classrooms, 69 students)
 - Parkside Elementary School (2 classrooms, 43 students)
 - Saint Mary's Catholic School (1 classroom, 10 students)
 - Parkside Elementary School (2 classrooms, 52 students)
- Bloomington
 - Trinity Lutheran Elementary School (2 classrooms, 42 students)
 - Glenn Elementary School (2 classrooms, 41 students)
 - Benjamin Elementary School (4 classrooms, 94 students)
 - Cedar Ridge Elementary School (3 classrooms, 70 students)
 - Stevenson Elementary School (3 classrooms, 54 students)
 - Oakland Elementary School (3 classrooms, 77 students)
 - Grove Elementary School (1 classroom, 23 students)
 - Fox Creek Elementary School (2 classrooms, 40 students)
 - Washington Elementary School (2 classrooms, 39 students)

- McLean County
 - LeRoy Elementary School (3 classrooms, 60 students)
 - Lexington Elementary School (2 classrooms, 29 students)
 - Ridgeview Elementary School (2 classrooms, 39 students)
 - Olympia North Elementary School (2 classrooms, 39 students)

Summer Library Program

- Presented Summer Reading programs, specifically focused on plastic bag recycling through the story *One Plastic Bag: Isatou Ceesay and the Recycling Women of the Gambia* by Miranda Paul.
 - Mt Hope-Funks Grove District Library (57 attendees)
 - Carlock Public Library (3 attendees)
 - Allin Township Library (9 attendees)
 - Martin Township Public Library (22 attendees)
 - Danvers Public Library (47 attendees)
 - JT & EJ Crumbaugh Library (45 attendees)
 - Gridley Public Library (14 attendees)
 - Heyworth Public Library (34 attendees)
 - Lexington Public Library (33 attendees)
 - Bloomington Public Library (42 attendees)
 - Towanda District Library (4 attendees)
 - Hudson Area Public Library (18 attendees)
 - El Paso District Library (8 attendees)
 - Normal Public Library (10 attendees)
 - Chenoa Public Library (6 attendees)



Other K-12 programs

- Presented a children's recycling program at Coffee Hound for 2 participants.
- Taught 6 children aged 7-11 years old about vermicomposting and worm anatomy as part of Zoos Day at Miller Park Zoo.
- Presented to fourteen 4H students from 3rd grade to 8th grade about vermicomposting and how it would improve their gardening 4H projects at the 4H Fun and Learning Day.
- Spoke to two hundred and nine 1st through 8th grade students from McLean County about recycling and cornstarch packing peanuts at the Education Day hosted at the Corn Crib.
- Talked to 26 families about recycling and the upcoming library program at the El Paso District Library summer reading kick-off event.
- Presented to thirty-three 3rd through 5th graders about worms and vermicomposting at Little Jewels Learning Center.
- Discussed recycling with 58 K-2nd grade students at Little Jewels Learning Center. Together we read "Michael Recycle" by Ellie Bethel and played a recycling relay sorting game.
- Talked to 22 children about recycling and vermicomposting at the Boys and Girls Club-Club Connect event.



- Talked to 8 library goers about plastic bag recycling at the DeerRidge Bookmobile stop which is part of the Golden Prairie Library District.
- Discussed with 40 1st through 5th graders at the Children's Discovery Museum's STEAM week about ways we can be environmentally friendly including recycling, composting, and cultivating native plants. Looked at vermicomposting worms and made seed balls with native seed.
- Played a recycling sorting activity and gave information to 36 adults and children at the Inside Out Accessible Art Annual Art Fair.
- Visited John Bierbaum's Social Studies Class at Normal West and discussed with 25 students the banning of Styrofoam and other "trash plastics", bottling bills for plastic bottling, ways that businesses can announce they are "green-friendly", and ways to increase recycling IQ of their student body.
- Taught a plastics recycling class for a homeschool group of 13 students.
- Discussed plastics recycling and sustainability with 3 homeschoolers.
- Talked to six K through 6th graders about recycling at the Unity Community Center. Students played a recycling sorting game and read "Michael Recycle" by Ellie Bethel.
- Talked to four 6th through 12th graders about vermicomposting at the Unity Community Center, showing them live worms and discussing the benefits of composting.
- Discussed vermicomposting with thirty 5th grade students at Epiphany Jr. High. Students had the chance to hold worms and learn about the benefits of composting and worm anatomy.
- Talked to 15 youth library goers about recycling and composting correctly at the Normal Public Library.

University Programs

- Spoke with 21 Illinois Wesleyan University Students who were interested in internships and volunteer work with the EAC.
- Presented to 33 Illinois State University students in an environmental economics course about the economics of recycling.
- Engaged with 56 people at the EAC's table at Illinois State University's NutriFest on topics including recycling, composting, and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Shared information with 82 Illinois State University students and faculty about recycling and volunteer opportunities including Tree Corps and storm drain stenciling at the Festival ISU event.

Other Community Educational Programs, Presentations, and Events

- Presented to 7 Bloomington-Normal residents at Coffee Hound about proper recycling in McLean County.
- Presented on vermicomposting to 6 community members. This presentation was the first in the GREEN TOPics series, a collaboration between the Ecology Action Center and Green Top Grocery.
- Had a booth at Pride Fest where 163 festival goers engaged in environmental trivia questions about waste reduction, clean water, clean air, energy, and environmental justice.
- Presented to 23 teachers at the ROE 17 History and Social Science Symposium. This presentation covered environmental education programs that the EAC offers,



volunteer opportunities, and why environmental education is important and easily integrated into the classroom.

- Presented to 6 employees at the Family Community Resource Center about recycling in the office.
- Spoke to 12 property assessors about "Greening your office" by reducing waste, and conserving energy at the Illinois Assessors Conference.
- Presented to 29 seniors at the Activity and Recreation Center about recycling and composting.
- Talked to multiple families totaling 25 people about packing peanuts and recyclable items at the Earth Month event hosted by the Normal Public Library.
- Discussed business recycling with 9 McLean County Chamber of Commerce members through the chamber's business education lunch and learn.
- Presented to 18 women at the Normal First United Methodist Church Women's Group about what is recyclable in McLean County.
- Presented to 33 members of the Bloomington Rotary Club about recycling within McLean County.
- Hosted a table with information about recycling and Tree Corps at the Rivian 5k. Reached 54 attendees.
- Talked to 40 people about the EAC's programs including recycling, GHG emissions, energy efficiency, and clean water at the BUSEUM event hosted at the McLean County Museum of History.
- Spoke with 73 visitors about recycling and volunteer opportunities at the Twin City Showcase hosted by the McLean County Chamber of Commerce.
- Spoke to 12 residents about recycling, general waste reduction, and HHW at the Old North Neighborhood Association Meeting.
- Engaged with 44 people at the EAC's table at the Second Presbyterian Earth Care Fair about recycling and other related topics.
- Talked to 9 residents about recycling and composting at El Paso District Library.
- Discussed business recycling and composting with 13 professionals at the Regional Office of Education 17.
- Talked to 57 people about what is and is not recyclable via a recycling sorting game at Crossroads for the Second Saturday Sidewalk Sales in Downtown Bloomington.
- Presented to 25 residents about recycling and the recycling market at Luther Oaks Retirement Home.
- Gave a recycling presentation for 11 employees at the Copy Shop in Bloomington which went over general information about what is and is not recyclable in McLean County.

Workshops

- Presented 4 backyard composting workshops to 11 attendees total which provided information on how composting helps divert waste from landfills and reduce methane release. After the workshop, participants took home a custom-built 55-gallon compost bin.
- Presented 3 vermicomposting workshops to 10 attendees total which provided information on how vermicomposting helps divert waste from landfills and reduce methane release. After workshop, participants took home a custom-built vermicomposting bin.

Community Events

- In total 43 clear streams were utilized at the McLean County Fair to help collect 1,500 pounds of recyclable materials. Thirty-four Green Team Volunteers and 6 Ecology Action Center staff members aided in this collection.

- Filled up about 10 carts worth of compost at the Sweet Corn Circus. 1,435 residents composted, recycled, and/or discussed composting and HHW with EAC staff and volunteers.

MARKETING & OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Recycling & Waste interactions:
 - Recycle Coach recycling information application had 408,504 interactions.
 - Answered 819 phone calls, emails, and other inquires about the disposal of household hazardous waste and recycling.
- Radio Interviews:
 - Interviewed with WGLT for their "Welcome Home" series which informs new residents about living in Bloomington-Normal. Discussed recycling options for residents. This interview reached approximately 25,000 people.
 - Interviewed with WJBC on business recycling and ways to reduce wastes in restaurants in conjunction with the McLean County Small Business Development Council. Reached about 1,000 listeners.
 - Interviewed with WJBC on Talked about upcoming rain barrel, composting, vermicomposting classes, and upcoming storm drain stenciling volunteer days. Reached about 1,000 listeners.
 - Interviewed with WJBC on green Christmas gift ideas available at the Ecology Action Center. Reached about 1,000 listeners.
 - Advertised the Recycle Coach App on WBNQ reaching 19,600 listeners.
 - Promoted Recycle Coach via underwriting spots on WGLT reaching 26,000 listeners.
- Print and Online Promotions:
 - Promoted Earth Day with a full page advertisement in the Pantagraph that promoted EAC programs and services. This ad reached 19,250 print and online readers.
 - Advertised with the Pantagraph about the current recycling guidelines focusing on plastics recycling and promoting the Recycle Coach App. Ad reached 21,500 print readers.
 - Educated residents about common non-recyclable items through the Pantagraph. Ad reached 26,439 print and digital readers.
 - Advertised with the Pantagraph about upcoming composting workshops. Ad reached 26,439 print and digital readers.
 - Advertised with the Pantagraph about the upcoming Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event. Ad reached 26,439 print and digital users.
 - Ran an ad in the Pantagraph about local disposal options of common household hazardous wastes reaching 21,500 print and online users.
 - Promoted Recycle Coach through web promotions on the WGLT website reaching 34,825 viewers.
 - Sent out the EAC's General Recycling Flyer to 13,594 Unit 5 parents.
 - Sent a flyer to 14,670 Unit 5 parents about options of where to compost pumpkins.
 - Presented a live Facebook EAQs presentation on vermicomposting and upcoming workshops.
- Newsletters:

- Produced a first quarter EAC member newsletter featuring articles related to creek clean up events and connections between women and the environment. Mailed to 292 households in March.
- Produced a second quarter EAC member newsletter featuring articles related to sustainable camping and the problems with polystyrene. Mailed to 302 households in June.
- Produced a third quarter EAC member newsletter featuring articles related to recycling garden pots and updated legislation on latex paint disposal in the State of Illinois. Mailed to 304 households in September.
- Produced a fourth quarter EAC member newsletter featuring an article related to proper disposal of packaging from shipped holiday gifts. Mailed to 313 households in December.
- Sent monthly issues of the EAC Action News email newsletters to 1,900 email addresses to promote general recycling and waste reduction.
 - January's newsletter included information about an upcoming vermicomposting workshop.
 - February's newsletter included information about environmental justice.
 - April's newsletter included information about composting and upcoming HHW collection events.
 - May's newsletter included information about recycling garden pots.
 - July's newsletter included information about the upcoming HHW collection event and proper latex paint disposal.
 - August's newsletter included information about upcoming composting workshops, the HHW Event, and disposal of small appliances.
 - October's newsletter included information about the upcoming Shred Fest, the new Recycling Facebook Group, and ways in which residents could compost their pumpkins.
 - November's newsletter included a recycling game for adults and children to test their recycling knowledge and ways to be sustainable over Thanksgiving.
 - A special December newsletter included information on available green holiday gifts available at the EAC including reusable bags and community composting subscriptions.
- Materials Borrowed: The Ecology Action Center offers trash grabbers and clear streams for residents to borrow.
 - Loaned 12 trash grabbers, safety vests, and work gloves to the Lake Bloomington Association.
 - Loaned 6 trash grabbers, safety vests, and work gloves to a group of Illinois State University students.
 - The Village of McLean borrowed 30 trash grabbers for their Earth Day Clean Up Day.
 - The Lake Bloomington Association borrowed trash grabbers for 15 volunteers who picked up trash around Lake Bloomington.
 - Group of 6 volunteers borrowed trash grabbers to pick up trash on the trail.
 - Wesley Church borrowed 5 special event recycling containers for their annual rummage sale.

- Loaned 10 recycling clear streams to the town of Towanda for their 4th of July celebration
- 4-H group, The Steam Punks, borrowed 30 trash grabbers to clean up Underwood Park

