

MCLEAN COUNTY SOLID WASTE PROGRAM

2024 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 74 classrooms, reaching 1,574 students. This exceeds our annual goal.²

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 247 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: 30 programs, presented to 2,056 people, which exceeds our annual goal.

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

- ☑ Year to date: Our year-to-date total interactions from social media is 524,498 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 40,416 visits, which exceeds our annual goal.

2024 TOTAL REACH:

1,681,765

INTERACTIONS

DIRECT (PROGRAMS, EVENTS, PHONE INQUIRIES): 6,829

MEDIA (NEWSPAPER, RADIO, SOCIAL MEDIA, WEB): 879,268

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 85 Fourth grade classrooms in McLean County, which includes all public and private schools. Seven schools, representing 16 classrooms, have historically declined program invitations. Due to a staff injury in 2023, some classrooms were re-scheduled to 2024.

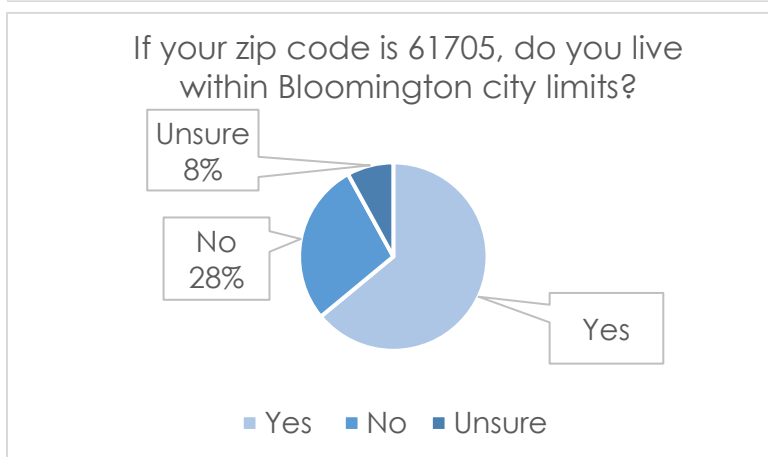
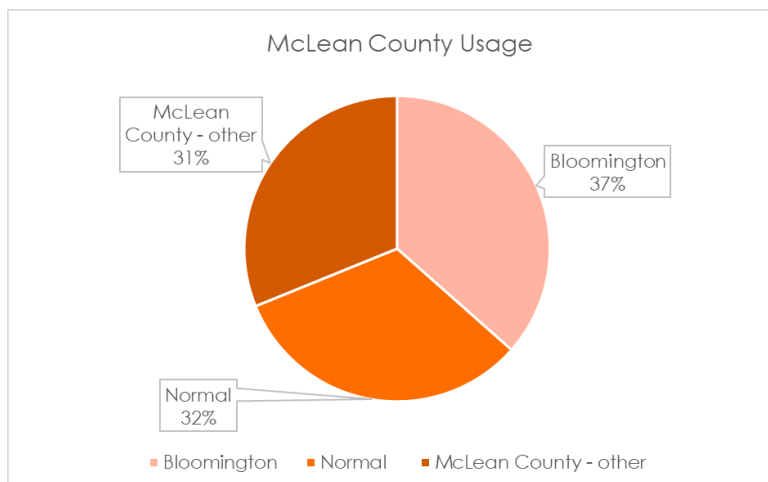
³ There are 15 local libraries within McLean County.

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

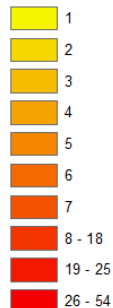
DROPBOX USER SURVEY

The 2024 drop box survey was conducted over one week in October (10/14-10/19) from 4pm-6pm each weekday and 10am-12pm on Saturday, October 19. The survey was administered orally, with responses recorded by the surveyor on their cell phone using a Google Form. This year, a new survey question was added to determine whether drop box users living in the 61705 ZIP code were located within the City of Bloomington.

One hundred and eighty-five users responded to the 2024 drop box survey. Walmart remains the most utilized location, with 70% of users recycling at that location. Users over the age of 40 continue to comprise the largest age group, representing 65% of all respondents. More than half (66%) of users reported multitasking while dropping off their recycling, and most materials (88%) came from a home rather than a business. This year, the percentage of users with access to curbside recycling dropped slightly from 55% to 46%. Of that 46%, 79% utilize the available curbside collection in addition to the drop boxes.

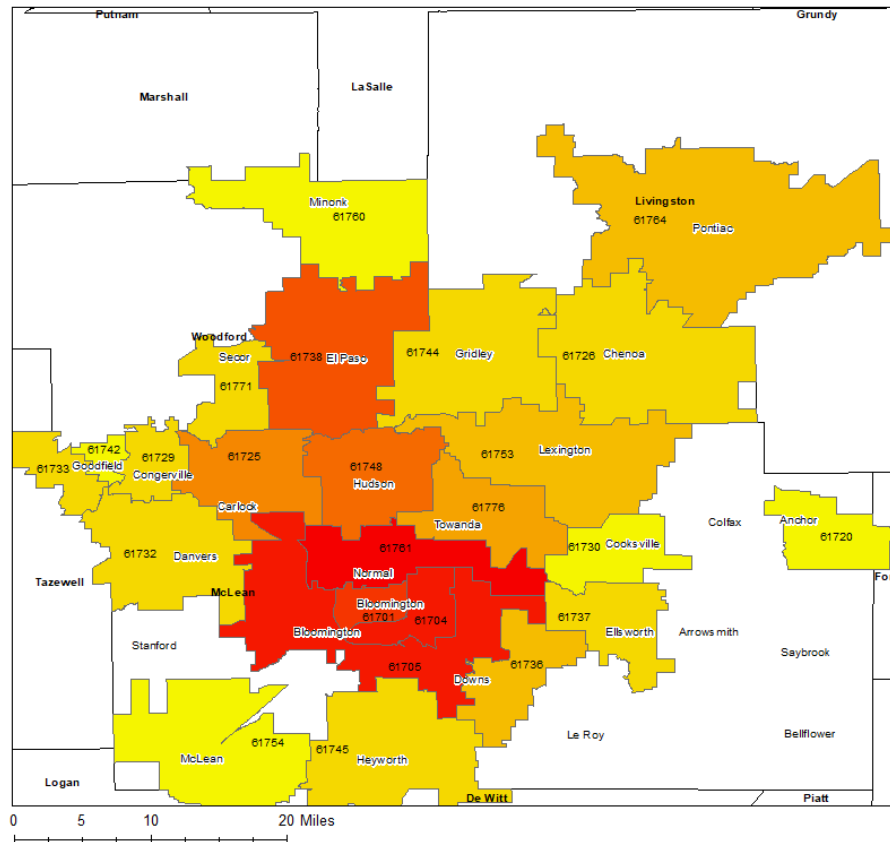


A total of 29 central Illinois municipalities from 9 different counties were represented in this year's survey. McLean County accounted for nearly 91% of all users. Within in McLean County, 32% of users are from the Town of Normal, 37% from the City of Bloomington, and the remaining 31% from other areas of the county. The municipalities outside of Bloomington-Normal with the most representation this year are El Paso (16%), Hudson (16%), Carlock (11%), and Towanda (11%). Most users visit the recycling sites twice a month (36%) followed by once a month (22%) and once a week (20%). 25 respondents reported living within the 61705 area code. 16 live within Bloomington city limits. 7 respondents reported they did not live within Bloomington city limits and were counted as McLean County – other. 2 respondents were unsure and were not included in either Bloomington or McLean County.



ECOLOGY
ACTION CENTER

2024 Dropbox Survey
Data Collected by the
Ecology Action Center in
October 2024



McLean County's recycle rate grew slightly by almost 1% to 47.72% in 2023. Out of the 235,915 tons of waste that was generated in McLean County, 112,577 tons were recycled. This is the first time the amount of solid waste recycled has reached over 100,000 tons. The County is still making progress towards its 50% recycling rate goal set in the 2017 Twenty-Year Solid Waste Management Plan. McLean County is well ahead of the national recycling average of 32% which was set in 2018.

One area of increase is in electronics recycling outside of the McLean County Residential Electronics Recycling program. Larger businesses and institutions continue to contribute to the recycling rate with successful recycling programs and diversion rates. A rise in electronics recycling could be contributed to remote working trends that arose during COVID. Smaller community recycling programs are also seeing a rise in recycled materials. The EAC's Community Composting program collected 43 tons of food scraps and other organic materials, an increase of 30% from 2021. The Bloomington Township program, POTS or Promoting Others To Succeed, collects and recycles plastic plant pots and trays. This program recycled over 13 tons of plastics in 2023, up 19% from the previous years.

Some areas with obvious decline are CRT televisions which are no longer produced and can account for the decline in residential electronics recycling which is measured by weight. CFL

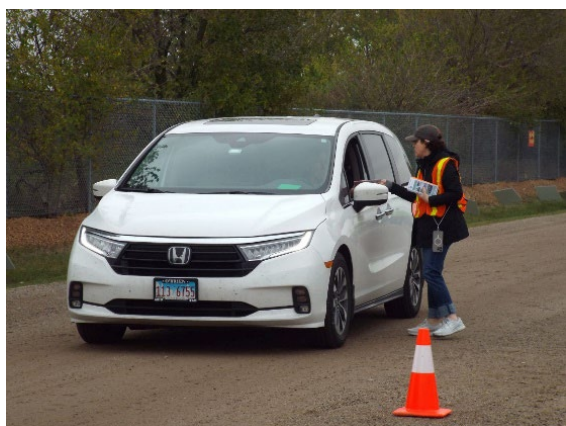
light bulbs are also steadily declining due to them being phased out of the market and replaced with LED bulbs. Another area of decline is with lumber and pallets which can be attributed to changes in construction and demolition recycling. Tighter regulations and increased contamination are making it much harder for these items to be recycled.

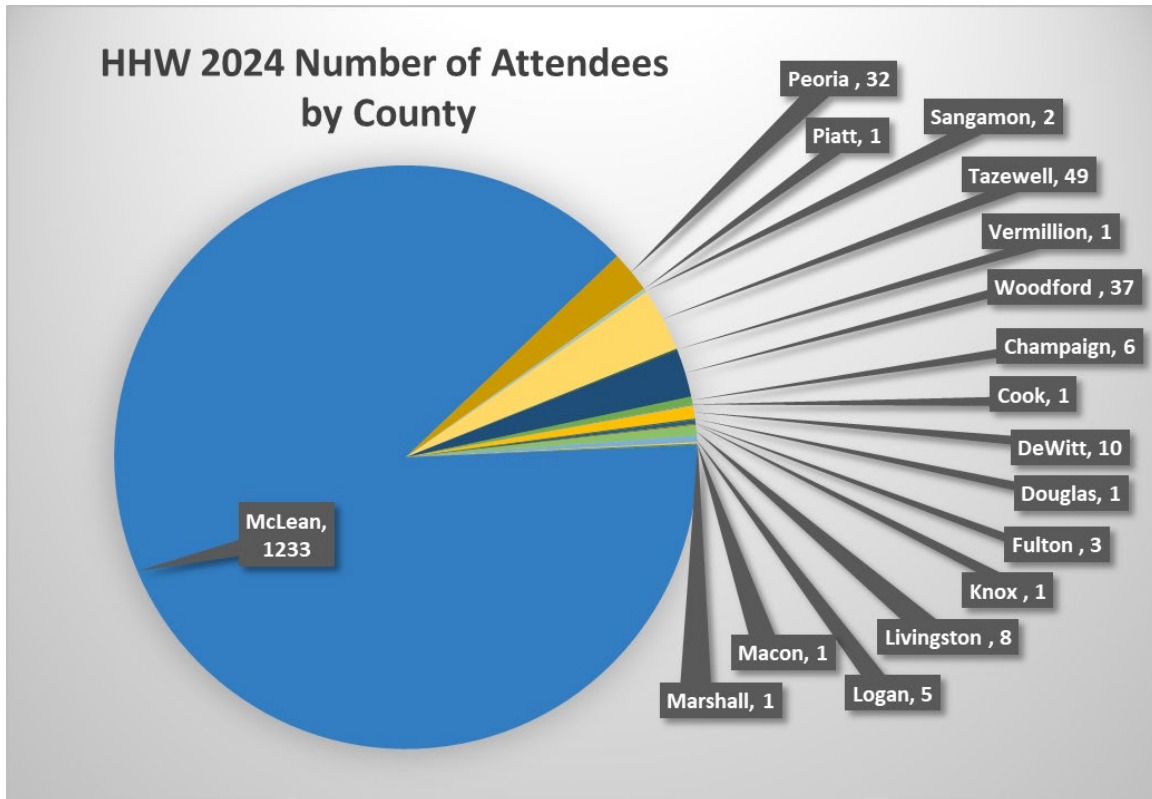
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total MSW Recycled (tons)	88,330	76,487	82,205	98,949	112,577
Total MSW landfilled (tons)	104,772	104,919	105,442	112,264	123,339
Total MSW Generated (tons)	193,102	181,406	187,647	211,213	235,916
Recycling Rate	45.7%	42.2%	43.8%	46.9%	47.7%

MCLEAN COUNTY HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION

The 2024 Household Hazardous Waste Collection event took place at the Interstate Center in Bloomington on Saturday, September 28, 2024. EAC staff spent many hours planning, coordinating, and marketing the event and assisted volunteers the day of by directing traffic, handing out EAC info, answering questions, and making sure the event ran smoothly.

- 1,393 appointments made
- 1,147 attending households
- 48 volunteers worked 138.5 volunteer hours
- 17 Illinois counties represented
- 21,083 gallons of HHW materials collected





SOLID WASTE COORDINATOR ACTIVITIES

Solid Waste Planning Grant:

- Submitted quarterly reports to the Illinois EPA.
- Met with the students working on the project and went over the survey and interview questions.
- Started work on the five-year plan update.
- Met with the Town of Normal Public Works department to discuss multifamily/apartment recycling in order to address one of the goals in the solid waste plan.
- Completed all grant requirements for the Illinois EPA's Planning Grant for the solid waste plan update

Pollution Control Committee Meetings:

- Attended the Pollution Control Committee meeting for the Henson/LRS siting permit review.
- Attended the McLean County Board meeting where they voted on the recommendation for a transfer station.
- Attended a conference call to discuss the appeal to the siting review decision.
- Attended an appeal meeting with relevant parties about how to move forward.
- Complied all communications for the Lakeshore Recycling System pollution control siting hearing.

Permanent HHW Facility:

- Met with the new IEPA household hazardous waste coordinator about the Fall collection event and a permanent facility in McLean County.

- Reviewed the Stage 1 & 2 of the feasibility report for a permanent facility in McLean County.
- Met with the solid waste committee to discuss the findings of the stage 1 feasibility study for a permanent household hazardous waste facility in McLean County.
- Met with the committee to discuss thoughts and actions based on the report.

Other Coordinator Activities:

- Attended the Stevenson Center Fellows presentation on their findings of the survey they conducted on the recycling knowledge of McLean County residents.
- Made continual updates to the Recycle Coach database and EAC website.
- Kept continual inventory of loaner equipment (trash grabbers, work gloves, safety vests).
- Met with the IWU green team to try and help them with their recycling program on campus.
- Applied for a 2024 household hazardous waste collection event to be held in McLean County through the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.
- Attended an IEPA technical assistance webinar on their medical sharps grant and drafted a one-pager and sent to area waste haulers, recyclers, public works, and parks and rec employees to gauge the need of a medical sharps drop-off program.
- Attended a grant support for foam recycling webinar and sent the information to relevant parties.
- Hosted a Solid Waste Advisory Committee meeting and shared updates on the solid waste program.
- Received two certificates for completing an Introduction to Zero Waste Principals and Zero Waste for Businesses and Institutions virtual classes through the Zero Waste Alliance.
- Met with our Recycle Coach membership advisor to transition to the state program.
- Applied for and received (pending contract) the Department of Energy's Waste Analysis and Strategies for Transportation End-Uses in partnership with ISU, BNWRD, and Quasar Energy Group. The proposal is titled A Feasibility Study of Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) Production from Organic Wastes for Local Transportation in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois.
- Met with the ISU Office of Sustainability to discuss how to better reach off-campus housing students with recycling information.
- Entered into a sub award agreement with McLean County for the Illinois EPA's Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant that was received for the EAC to complete the Community Energy Strategic Plan.
 - Attended the kickoff meeting for grant recipients.
- Gathered a group of EAC and ISU staff to attend a tour of One Earth Energy to learn more about their carbon sequestration plan.
- Held a Solid Waste Advisory meeting to discuss updates on the hazardous waste collection and the 5-year update to the solid waste plan.
- Attended the Illinois Counties Solid Waste Management Association (ILCSWMA) conference.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Fourth Grade Recycling and Waste Reduction Education Programs

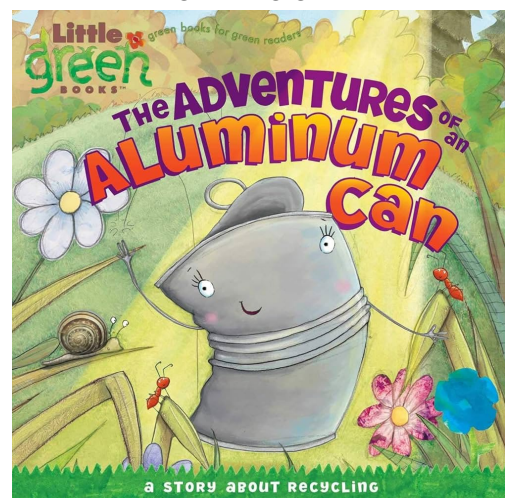
- Normal
 - Glenn Elementary School (2 Classrooms, 44 students)
 - Epiphany Catholic School (2 Classrooms, 32 students)
 - Oakdale Elementary School (3 Classrooms, 61 students)
 - Thomas Metcalf School (2 Classrooms, 42 students)
 - Prairieland Elementary School (3 Classrooms, 85 students)

- Parkside Elementary School (2 classrooms, 43 students)
- Colleen Hoose Elementary School (3 classrooms, 61 students)
- Grove Elementary School (4 classrooms, 84 students)
- Bloomington
 - Northpoint Elementary School (4 classrooms, 100 students)⁵
 - Bent Elementary School (1 classroom, 16 students)
 - St. Mary's School (1 Classroom, 11 students)
 - Trinity Lutheran School (2 Classrooms, 45 Students)
 - Oakland Elementary School (3 classrooms, 75 students)
 - Northpoint Elementary School (3 classrooms, 66 students)
 - Washington Elementary School (3 classrooms, 73 students)
 - Benjamin Elementary School (4 classrooms, 100 students)
 - Fox Creek Elementary School (2 classrooms, 45 students)
 - Stevenson Elementary School (3 classrooms, 65 students)
 - Cedar Ridge Elementary School (4 classrooms, 87 students)
 - Bent Elementary School (3 classrooms, 65 students)
 - Pepper Ridge Elementary School (2 classrooms, 40 students)
 - Cornerstone Christian Academy (2 classrooms, 28 students)
- McLean County
 - Hudson Elementary School (2 classrooms, 32 students)⁵
 - Heyworth Elementary School (3 classrooms, 69 students)
 - Heyworth Elementary School (3 classrooms, 59 students)
 - Ridgeview Elementary School (2 classrooms, 34 students)
 - Olympia Elementary School (2 classrooms, 45 students)
 - LeRoy Elementary School (3 classrooms, 54 students)
 - Carlock Elementary School (1 classroom, 13 students)

Summer Library Program

The Ecology Action Center's summer library program featured the book *Adventures of an Aluminum Can* by Alison Inches. Through humorous diary entries of a can, kids learned about the journey of aluminum, from manufacturing to recycling. This engaging story sparked meaningful discussions about recycling and landfills. After the story, participants embossed a sheet of aluminum made from a recycled aluminum can and played a recycling sorting game.

- EJ & TJ Crumbaugh Library (25 attendees)
- Deer Creek Public Library (15 attendees)⁶
- Martin Township Public Library (20 attendees)
- Mt. Hope-Funks Grove District Library (45 attendees)
- Allin Township Public Library (4 attendees)
- Danvers Public Library (15 attendees)
- Hudson Public Library (26 attendees)
- Chenoa Public Library (9 attendees)
- Lexington Public Library (21 attendees)
- Heyworth Public Library (25 attendees)
- Gridley Public Library (13 attendees)
- Normal Public Library (8 attendees)
- El Paso Public Library (4 attendees)



⁵ These programs were given to the 2023 4th grade class in the spring semester.

⁶ Deer Creek Public Library is not within McLean County. However, the library paid to have the program. This library is not included in the 60% goal.

- Bloomington Public Library⁷ (24 attendees)
- Carlock Public Library (8 attendees)
- Towanda Public Library⁸ (0 attendees)

Other K-12 programs

- Talked to 10 homeschooled high school students about the economics of recycling which ended in a mock debate about where to build a new landfill.
- Presented a recycling program to 65 5th grade students and teachers at Sheridan Elementary School.
- Thirty-two families played a recycling game at the Sciencepalooza event at Prairieland Elementary School.
- Talked to 38 preschoolers at Mulberry School about recycling and landfills.
- Talked to 100 Boys and Girls Club students about recycling through playing a recycling relay game.
- Taught 30 students in the Benjamin Elementary School Garden Club about the benefits of vermicomposting.
- Discussed recycling and played a recycling sorting game with 42 Irving Elementary School Second Graders.
- Talked to 54 kids and families at the Children's Discovery Museum about recycling through a rotating display game where students could move around items to understand if they were recyclable, trash, or compostable.
- Talked to thirty 6-12th grade Bridge Academy students about how to properly recycle in McLean County.
- Presented to 7 Girl Scouts and 2 adults about how they could implement composting at Corpus Christi Catholic School.
- Talked to 31 students at the Little Jewels Oakland Campus about vermicomposting.
- Gave a recycling presentation to 48 kindergarteners and 1st graders at Little Jewels Learning Center, Evergreen Campus, about how to properly recycle.
- Discussed vermicomposting with 22 families at the Children's Discovery Museum.
- Gave a presentation to 30 high school students about waste reduction strategies.
- Gave a presentation for 9 Normal West High schoolers about business sustainability for their entrepreneur class.
- Met with 18 students in the Carlock Garden Club and discussed vermicomposting.



University Programs

- Played a recycling game with 94 Illinois Wesleyan University students where they learned about what is recyclable in McLean County.
- EAC staff talked to 106 Festival ISU attendees about volunteer opportunities, proper recycling, and the upcoming HHW collection event.

⁷ Due to last minute scheduling conflicts this program was led by Bloomington Public Library librarians using lesson plans provided by Ecology Action Center Staff.

⁸ EAC staff attended this program, but no library goers were present.

- Talked to 4 ISU students about working as an environmental health (EH) professional at the Ecology Action Center, focusing on EH in the solid waste sector.
- Talked to 24 Illinois Wesleyan University students about potential internships and volunteering opportunities with the Ecology Action Center.

Other Community Educational Programs, Presentations, and Events

- Held an information table at the University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener's Home Lawn and Garden Day event with information about composting and recycling. The table was visited by 51 attendees.
- Gave a business recycling presentation for the Small Business Development Council of McLean County clients. This presentation was uploaded to their platform for over 1,338 clients to access.
- Talked to 16 DKG members about recycling in McLean County.
- Talked to 10 community members at the Normal Public Library about ways they can reduce their waste, including information about composting and recycling.
- Talked to 40 Daughters of the American Revolution members about proper recycling.
- Talked to 10 families at Danvers Public Library about vermicomposting.
- Presented to 12 employees at BrightPoint about proper composting and recycling techniques.
- Talked to 85 McLean County Wellness Fair attendees about general EAC info, recycling, and composting.
- Co-hosted a Sunnyside Park Clean Up Event with the City of Bloomington and S.O.A.R. Fifteen people were in attendance.
- Talked to 11 people about composting at the Rivian 5k.
- Gave a composting program for 4 community members at the Danvers Public Library for International Compost Awareness Week.
- Presented a composting program for 7 community members at the Normal Public Library for International Compost Awareness Week.
- Gave a composting presentation for 8 community members at the Bloomington Public Library for International Compost Awareness Week.
- Talked to 4 Illinois Art Station educators about how to correctly recycle.
- Discussed recycling and community composting with 27 people at the Constitution Trail Birthday Event.
- Talked to 35 Golden K members about recycling in McLean County.
- Held a booth at the Bloomington Public Library Juneteenth event. Talked to 60 people about recycling.
- Talked to 8 restaurant owners and Small Business Development Council clients about how to be a more sustainable restaurant.
- Held a booth at the Downtown Bloomington Second Saturday event. Discussed proper recycling and gave HHW information to 40 people.
- Talked to 170 people at Downtown Bloomington Pride Fest about EAC programming including recycling and composting information.



- Talked to 15 people at the Veggie Oasis, part of the West Bloomington Revitalization Project, about the upcoming HHW event.
- The Ecology Action Center held a booth at the Sweet Corn Circus in Uptown Normal. Two bags of recycling and 9 carts of compost were collected for proper disposal. EAC staff engaged with 1,192 people either through aiding them in composting their corn cobs and boats, discussing upcoming events, or updating them on current recycling guidelines.
- EAC staff talked to 14 people about composting and the Yard Smart program at Nature Trail Days hosted by Illinois Extension.
- Fifty-three attendees were spoken to about the Yard Smart Program and the Tree Corps program at the Annual Master Naturalists Conference.
- Talked to 20 people at the Glorious Garden Fest about yard smart practices.
- Staff gave a presentation updating 30 MCRPC members on EAC programs including its solid waste programs.
- Chatted with 11 Baby Fold employees at their Wellness Fair. Discussed recycling and composting.
- Held a booth at the Bloomington Farmers Market assisting 96 residents with recycling and composting questions and promoting various pumpkin recycling avenues available to them.
- Presented to 25 solid waste professionals at the Illinois Counties Solid Waste Management Association (ILCSWMA) conference about why their municipality should adopt Recycle Coach.
- Staff had a booth at the Radar Farms & Illinois Extension Pumpkin Smash. Talked to 27 people about composting.
- Discussed food waste reduction, reducing energy usage, and water usage in your kitchen/home during the Sustainable Kitchen Presentation at the Bloomington Public Library. 12 Bloomington residents attended.

Workshops

- Presented 4 backyard composting workshops to 6 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 4 vermicomposting workshops to 7 attendees total which provided information on how vermicomposting helps divert waste from landfills and reduce methane release. After the workshop, participants took home a custom-built vermicomposting bin.

Materials Borrowed

The Ecology Action Center offers trash grabbers and clear streams for residents to borrow.

- Loaned 20 trash grabbers, safety vests, and work gloves to the Village of McLean for their community clean up.
- Wesley United Methodist Church borrowed 3 clear streams for their annual rummage sale.
- One ISU student borrowed a trash grabber and safety equipment to collect trash around ISU
- The Lake Bloomington Association borrowed trash grabbers for 15 volunteers who picked up trash around Lake Bloomington.
- A Boy Scout Troop borrowed 3 trash grabbers and safety gear to use for a Cub Scout activity.

- The Lake Bloomington Association borrowed trash grabbers and safety vests for 20 volunteers who picked up trash around Lake Bloomington.
- 22 trash grabbers and gloves were loaned out to a homeschool nature co-op for a cleanup of Fransen Nature Area.

MCLEAN UP CREW VOLUNTEERING

The mCLEAN up crew volunteer workdays aim to remove litter from McLean County in order to raise awareness about proper disposal of items and to beautify the community. The Ecology Action Center coordinates volunteers at designated sites to collect and properly dispose of waste, leaving areas better than they found them.

- Normal
 - Ten Stratus Network volunteers worked to clean up uptown Normal near the train station. 15 bags of trash were removed.
 - Nine people collected 10 bags of garbage, 1 tv set, a bike frame, and some house siding on West Beaufort in Normal, IL.
 - Twelve students from Heartland Community College picked up trash near the AMC Classic in Normal. 14 trash bags were filled with trash.
 - Eight community members picked up 19 bags of trash, two large mats, and abandoned drainage tiling at the retention pond near Walmart in Normal.
- Bloomington
 - Nine bags of trash were collected on Constitution Trail near Washington Street in Bloomington with the help of 3 volunteers.
 - Five mCLEAN Up Crew volunteers collected trash on Constitution trail and the railroad tracks in South Bloomington. 10 bags of trash, a flatscreen tv and 100 lbs. of steel rotors were collected.
 - Five Illinois State University fraternity members collected 24 five-gallon buckets of trash near Denny's in Bloomington.
 - Sixteen bags of trash were collected on Constitution Trail in Bloomington, south of the police department with the help of 3 volunteers.



MARKETING & OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Recycling & Waste interactions:
 - Recycle Coach recycling information application had 1,159,487 interactions.
 - Answered 751 phone calls, emails, and other inquiries about the disposal of household hazardous waste and recycling.
- Radio Interviews:
 - Promoted the Recycle Coach App on WJBC and WGLT, totaling 15,700 impressions.
 - Interviewed with WJBC reaching 1,000 listeners. Topics discussed were upcoming volunteer needs for the McLean County Fair.
 - Interviewed with WJBC about upcoming the Recycling Dropbox Survey. Reached 1,000 listeners.
 - Ran a Recycle Coach advertisement with the WJBC and WGLT, totaling 15,600 impressions.
 - Ran HHW ad with WJBC, WGLT, WBNQ, and WCBU, totaling 38,800 impressions.
- Print and Online Promotions:
 - Ran an ad in the Pantagraph reaching 21,500 print subscribers about proper battery and electronics recycling. The online version of the ad totaled 10,501 impressions.
 - Sent the EAC's recycling flyer to 3,906 District 87 parents.
 - Sent a Valentine's Day Recycling Guide to 18,469 Unit 5 and District 87 parents.
 - Ran an ad in the Pantagraph reaching 21,500 print subscribers' proper disposal of food ware. The online version of the ad totaled 10,499 impressions.
 - Ran HHW ads with the Pantagraph (21,500 print subscribers & 20,999 impressions) and the Normalite.
 - Ran a Google Ad about HHW Collection. The Ad totaled 48,613 impressions.
 - Sent an HHW Flyer to 16,631 Unit 5 and District 87 families.

- Ran two Recycle Coach advertisements with the Pantagraph, reaching 43,000 print subscribers.
- Sent a Flyer to 16,818 Unit 5 and District 87 families detailing different pumpkin composting options in McLean County.
- Sent a Flyer to 16,817 Unit 5 and District 87 families detailing the recyclability of different holiday packaging.
- Newsletters:
 - Produced a first quarter EAC member newsletter featuring an article about the importance of small battery recycling. Mailed to 273 households in March.
 - Produced a second quarter EAC member newsletter featuring an article on plastic resin codes and PFAS. Mailed to 253 households in June.
 - Produced a third quarter EAC member newsletter featuring articles related to lightbulb legislation and battery recycling. Mailed to 264 households in September.
 - Produced a fourth quarter EAC member newsletter featuring articles related to sustainable giftwrapping, countertop composters, and how to recycle appliances. Mailed to 261 households in December.
 - Sent monthly issues of the EAC Action News email newsletters to 1,889 email addresses to promote general recycling and waste reduction.
 - January's newsletter included information about the new paint recycling program.
 - February's newsletter included information about medication disposal.
 - April's newsletter included information about a recycling truck fire, the importance of properly recycling batteries, eclipse glasses recycling, and the annual car seat trade-in event.
 - May's newsletter included information about recycling garden pots and plastic tub recycling.
 - July's newsletter included information about composting and clear stream borrowing. A plastic recycling quiz was also sent.
 - August's newsletter included information about landfills, hazardous waste collection, and upcoming volunteer events.
 - October's newsletter included information about election sign recycling, pumpkin composting, and the community composting program.
 - November's newsletter included information about proper grease disposal.
 - Emailed 3,249 recipients with an update about spring household hazardous waste events.