

MCLEAN COUNTY SOLID WASTE PROGRAM

2025 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 **75%** 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 69 classrooms, reaching 1,459 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: 13 programs, presented to 200 people. This exceeds our annual goal.

Goal: Provide recycling and waste reduction presentations for **30** local groups or approximately 750 individuals including civic groups, scouts, preschools, non-target school groups, university classes.⁴

- ☐ Year to date: 25 programs, presented to 504 people, representing 83% of our 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 **100,000** interactions annually.

- ☒ Year to date: Our year-to-date total interactions from social media is 545,816 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 **50,000** visits to these pages annually.

- ☒ Year to date: The year-to-date total of visits to our online resources is 56,461 visits, which exceeds our annual goal.

2025 TOTAL REACH:
1,069,141 INTERACTIONS

DIRECT (PROGRAMS, EVENTS, PHONE INQUIRIES): 4,887

MEDIA (NEWSPAPER, RADIO, SOCIAL MEDIA, WEB): 1,064,254

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.

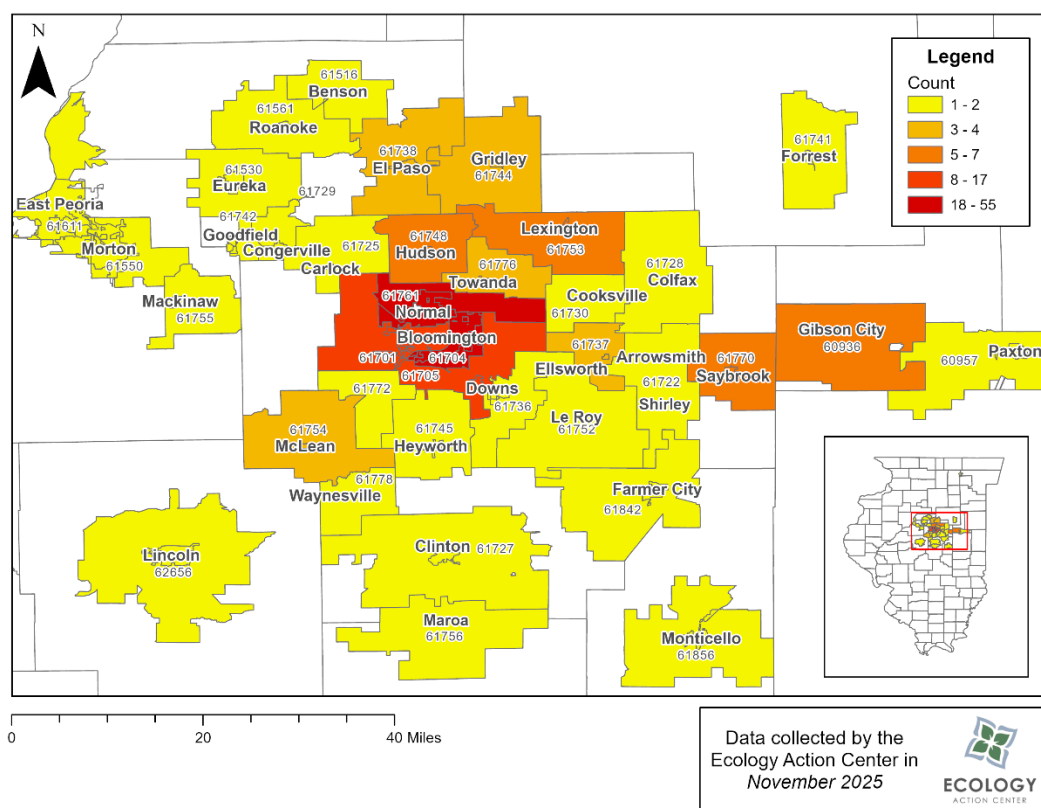
³ There are 15 local libraries within McLean County.

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

DROPBOX USER SURVEY

The Town of Normal hosts four residential drop box recycling locations throughout the Bloomington-Normal community. These locations are designed to improve access to recycling and are funded through an intergovernmental agreement among the Town of Normal, City of Bloomington, and McLean County. Recyclables are collected and processed by local material recovery facility, Circular Services. Each drop box is located outdoors and includes three to four large roll-off dumpsters that accept sorted recyclable metal, glass, plastic, cardboard, and paper. The Ecology Action Center annually surveys users of the drop box recycling program to better understand their use and to support informed decisions regarding the program. The four recycling drop box locations are located at the Walmart on Greenbriar, the Jewel Osco on Cottage, Heartland Community College, and YouthBuild McLean County at the Cross Roads Center.

Recycling Dropbox Survey Distribution by Zip Code



Two hundred and one users responded to the 2025 drop box survey. Calculated by weight, Walmart remains the most utilized location. Users over the age of 40 continue to comprise the largest age group, representing 80% of all respondents. Almost all users, 82%, reported they were multitasking while dropping off their recycling, and almost all materials, 95%, came from a home rather than a business. Users that have access to curbside recycling where they live was an even split with 49% having curbside and 50% without (1% unsure). Of that 49%, 80% utilize the available curbside collection in addition to the drop boxes.

A total of 34 central Illinois municipalities from 10 different counties were represented in this year's survey. McLean County accounted for nearly 90% of all users. Within McLean County, 27%

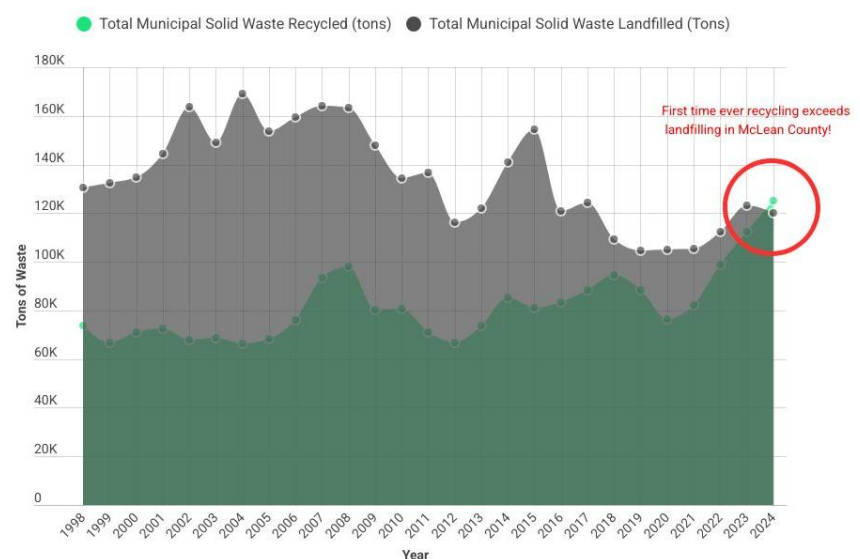
of users are from the Town of Normal, 43% from the City of Bloomington, and the remaining 30% from other areas of the county. The municipalities outside of Bloomington-Normal with the most representation this year are Saybrook (10%), Lexington (8%), Hudson (8%), and Towanda (6%). Most users visit the recycling sites twice a month (28%) followed by once a week (28%) and once a month (24%).

COUNTY WASTE GENERATION & RECYCLING RATE

McLean County's recycling rate reached 51% in 2024 (which was calculated and reported in 2025), making it the first time ever that over roughly half of the waste generated in the county was recycled. This is a big milestone for McLean County and one of the major goals for the first quarter (2017-2022) of the *2017 Twenty-Year Solid Waste Management Plan*.

The local construction and demolition recycling center, which also previously received bulk waste from Bloomington and Normal, had a large uptick in material processing during 2024. More textiles were recycled in 2024, including quilted mattress covers by mattress recycler Kern Mattress Outlet, who's working to expand their local recycling efforts through an initiative called Kernovate. Both Bloomington and Normal recycled more brush and leaves last year and the Ecology Action Center's Community Composting program collected 57.4 tons of food waste, a 23% increase from 2023.

McLean County, Illinois Annual Waste Generation and Recycling Rates



Some areas of decrease include paper recycling, which may partly be due to the overall reduction in paper waste as print media and classroom materials continue to transition to digital platforms. Additionally, improved manufacturing quality at large scale facilities has also led to significantly fewer materials, like lithium-ion batteries and glass, from entering the recycling

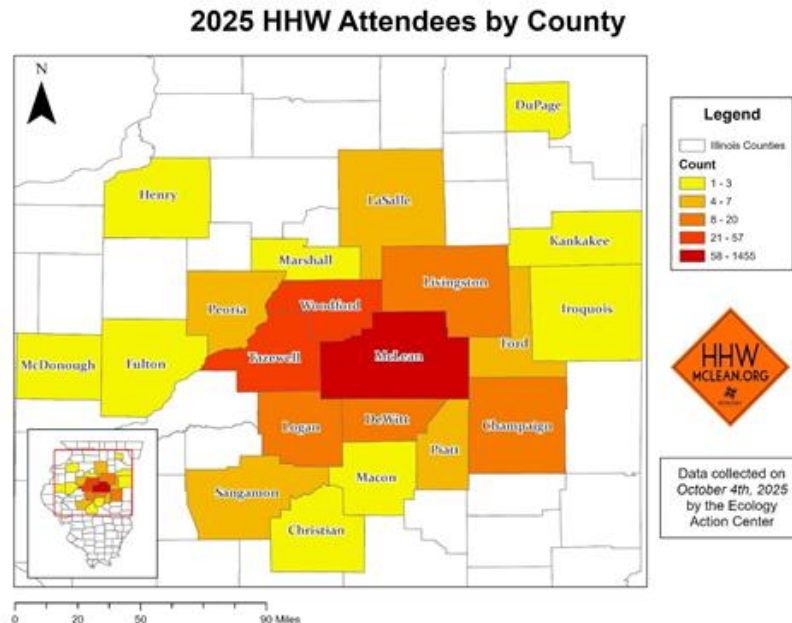
stream. Following market trends, we also saw a decrease in metal material being recycled in 2024 in contrast to 2023.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total MSW Recycled (tons)	76,487	82,205	98,949	112,577	125,221
Total MSW Landfilled (tons)	104,919	105,442	112,264	123,339	120,088
Total MSW Generated (tons)	181,406	187,647	211,213	235,916	245,309
Recycling Rate	42%	44%	47%	48%	51%

MCLEAN COUNTY HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION

On October 4, 2025, the McLean County Household Hazardous Waste Collection event took place the Interstate Center in Bloomington. Overall, the event ran smoothly with no major backups or delays, and no commercial or unacceptable waste encountered. However, other events occurring at the venue on the same day caused some minor issues with parking and confused attendees.

- 1,656 appointments made
- 1,222 cars in attendance
- 2,484 households served
- 51 volunteers worked 138.5 hours
- 21 Illinois counties represented 26,679 gallons of HHW materials collected



SOLID WASTE COORDINATOR ACTIVITIES

Household Hazardous Waste:

- Hosted a presentation on the results of the second stage findings of a feasibility study for a permanent household hazardous waste facility in McLean County.

Other Coordinator Activities:

- Supported local launch of Paint Care Recycling Program. Connected with local drop off locations to confirm participation. Updated information and locations in Recycle Coach.
- Supported local launch of Battery Network Recycling Program. Confirmed and assisted with accurate display information and updated Recycle Coach.
- Made continual updates to the Recycle Coach application database.

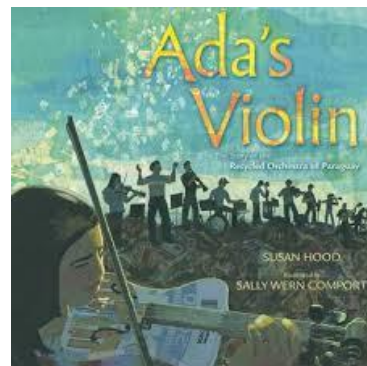
EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Fourth Grade Recycling and Waste Reduction Education Programs

- Normal
 - Thomas Metcalf School (2 classrooms, 48 students)
 - Colene Hoose Elementary School (3 classrooms, 61 students)
 - Prairieland Elementary School (3 classrooms 78 students)
 - Oakdale Elementary School (3 classrooms, 68 students)
 - Parkside Elementary School (3 classrooms, 74 students)
 - Grove Elementary School (4 classrooms, 80 students)
- Bloomington
 - Glenn Elementary School (2 classrooms, 50 students)
 - Fox Creek Elementary School (2 classrooms, 51 students)
 - Benjamin Elementary School (4 classrooms, 100 students)
 - Irving Elementary School (1 classroom, 15 students)
 - Sheridan Elementary School (4 classrooms, 61 students)
 - Northpoint Elementary School (3 classrooms, 89 students)
 - Trinity Lutheran School (2 classrooms, 39 students)
 - Cedar Ridge Elementary School (4 classrooms, 90 students)
 - Stevenson Elementary School (3 classrooms, 51 students)
 - Washington Elementary School (3 classrooms, 71 students)
 - Oakland Elementary School (3 classrooms, 75 students)
 - Epiphany Catholic School (2 classrooms, 30 students)
 - Cornerstone Christian Academy (2 classrooms, 30 students)
- McLean County
 - Tri-Valley Middle School (4 classrooms, 72 students)
 - Olympia North Elementary School (2 classrooms, 48 students)
 - LeRoy Elementary School (3 classrooms, 59 students)
 - Ridgeview Elementary School (2 classrooms, 31 students)
 - Carlock Elementary School (1 classroom, 16 students)

Summer Library Program

The Ecology Action Center's summer library program featured the picture book *Ada's Violin: The Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay* by Susan Hood, illustrated by Sally Wern Comport. The story describes life working in the landfill, and how students, with the help of their music teacher, were able to create music from trash, transforming their lives forever. Using donated recyclable materials, EAC staff then assisted attendees in making their own recycled instruments, including a milk jug guitar, tin can bass, can drum, paper towel roll trumpet, and can shakers.



- Heyworth Public Library (15 attendees)
- Towanda Public Library (2 attendees)
- Bloomington Public Library (40 attendees)
- Mt. Hope-Funks Grove Township Library (50 attendees)
- J.T. & E.J. Crumbaugh Library (7 attendees)
- Gridley Public Library (16 attendees)
- Carlock Public Library (15 attendees)
- El Paso Public Library (6 attendees)
- Martin Township Public Library (7 attendees)
- Allin Township Library (6 attendees)
- Cheney's Grove Township Library (3 attendees)
- Danvers Township Library (28 attendees)
- Chenoa Public Library (5 attendees)

Other K-12 programs

- Talked to 30 fifth grade students about what composting is and what it is used for at Epiphany Catholic School.
- Met with 12 students and two teachers at the environmental club at Normal Community Highschool to discuss proper recycling and the economics of recycling.
- Taught a lesson on composting using worms to eight K-2 students at Bloom Community School.
- Discussed proper recycling with 11 Hammitt Elementary Student Council members.
- Discussed the benefits of composting with four Hammitt Elementary School Garden Club members.
- Talked to 72 fifth grade students about the importance of Earth Day and how composting can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and extend the life of landfills.
- Discussed composting utilizing the picture book *Worm Makes a Sandwich* with 18 students at Unity Community School.
- Gave a presentation to 42 middle school and high school students as part of Illinois State's Summer STEAM Bootcamp.
- Discussed composting utilizing the picture book *Worm Makes a Sandwich* with 55 pre-K through third graders at Mulberry School.
- Met with 51 second graders at Irving School to discuss the importance of composting.
- Talked to 25 students about composting their lunch waste leftovers at the Irving Elementary School Summer Feeding Program.
- Met with Thomas Metcalf's sixth graders in regard to their Maker Space Class, which focuses on finding solutions to issues in McLean County. During this time, students asked questions about the EAC and formulated plans on how to solve environmental problems in the community.

- 26 Unity Community School students learned about the benefits of composting using the book *Worm Makes a Sandwich*.
- Eight Carlock Elementary School Garden Club students learned about vermicomposting and backyard composting through hands-on learning and picture books.
- Discussed vermicomposting with 25 English as a Second Language Program (ESL) students at Chiddix Jr. High.

University Programs

- Highlighted volunteer and internship opportunities to 6 Illinois Wesleyan University students at their Internship Fair.
- Met with 16 ISU students involved in SEAC and Sustainable State. Discussed EAC programs and issues, and how students can get involved in volunteering and internships. Proper recycling information was also discussed.
- 82 students stopped by to learn about the Ecology Action Center, volunteer opportunities, and the history of the EAC during ISU's Scavenger Hunt around Uptown Normal.
- Discussed EAC programs including recycling, BNCARE, volunteer opportunities, and Tree Corps with 84 ISU students at Festival ISU.
- An EAC staff member was a panelist for ISU's "Success Looks Like Me" presentation focused on Women in Sustainability. 15 students attended.

Other Community Educational Programs, Presentations, and Events

- Held a booth at Home, Lawn, and Garden Day. The booth promoted composting to 51 attendees.
- Presented about recycling and Teracycle topics to 10 Luther Oaks residents.
- Discussed proper recycling to one resident of Mayor Manner.
- Talked to 17 students at the Unity Community Center about recycling and reusing by playing a recycling game and making bracelets out of plastic bags.
- Presented to 30 Normal Rotary Club members about the EAC's solid waste programs and the 2071 Fund.
- Attended the Employee Wellness Fair hosted by the City of Bloomington, McLean County, and the Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District. Discussed proper recycling with 81 attendees.
- Provided recycling information to 54 attendees of the Bloomington Housing Association Job and Resource Fair.
- Demonstrated how vermicomposting works to 23 families at the Children's Discovery Museum.
- Presented at the Illinois Extension Homeschool Earth Day Workshop. Taught 12 homeschool children about vermicomposting, and students were able to harvest their own compost and take some compost home.
- Held a composting display at Bloomington Public Library to help promote International Compost Awareness Week.
- Celebrated International Compost Awareness Week with Carlock Public Library by giving a vermicomposting presentation to seven library visitors.
- Partnered with the Normal Public Library on a tour of the Illinois State University Farm where six attendees learned about how yard waste is turned into compost at the farm.
- Spoke with four staff members at the Family Resource Center about recycling and community composting.
- Discussed vermicomposting and benefits to gardening with 25 Boy Scouts during their summer camp.

- Discussed recycling and the community canopy program with 48 library patrons at the Bloomington Public Library Juneteenth program. Participants played a recycling sorting game to win a sticker.
- Tabled at the Juneteenth Community Celebration and had 45 interactions with visitors about recycling.
- Ten people discussed various recycling topics with EAC staff at the Rivian 5k.
- Talked to 42 families about composting, recycling, HHW, and the community canopy program at Normal Parks and Rec's Pack the Park event.
- Provided informational booth at Pride Fest in Downtown Bloomington. Shared information about recycling to 125 attendees.
- Discussed recycling, HHW, and the community canopy program with 86 people at Crossroads Fair Trade Store.
- Presented to six McLean County Department of Health employees about composting, vermicomposting, and community composting.
- The EAC interacted with 785 attendees at Sweet Corn Circus. Folks composted, recycled, and learned about compost and recycling. Nine 96-gallon carts of compost (ears of corn, paper boats, napkins) were filled and one bag of recycling was collected.
- The EAC held the first annual Volunteer Appreciation Event, where 31 volunteers enjoyed food, games, and company. Awards were given to 12 outstanding individuals.
- Informed 71 Bloomington Farmers Market attendees of the upcoming HHW event and of proper recycling.
- Presented ways that folks can have a sustainable kitchen to six attendees at the Normal Public Library.
- EAC staff promoted proper recycling and the upcoming HHW collection event to 150 Country Financial employees at their employee resource fair.
- Discussed fall composting initiatives with 44 Bloomington Farmers Market attendees. Brought and showed off the vermicomposting bin and the hands-on recycling rotating display.
- EAC staff shared information on recycling and composting at the Pumpkin Smash Event at Radar Farms. Forty-one families participated in a vermicompost harvesting activity.
- Read a Wall-E themed picture book to 25 families and discussed why taking care of our planet is important. Children made pots out of newspaper and took home native seeds to plant.
- Volunteer opportunities, including mCLEAN Up Crew Volunteering, was promoted to 13 people at the YICU Non-profit Fair at their Service Awards Ceremony.
- EAC staff tabled at the annual Chamber of Commerce Non-profit Showcase, where they answered recycling questions and promoted the Recycle Coach resource to 36 people.
- Presented at the All About Normal Partners Week promoting EAC services including our work in waste reduction. Twenty people were present during the presentation.

Workshops

- The Ecology Action Center held six backyard composting workshops for 11 attendees. Attendees took home a completed compost bin made from a repurposed 55-gallon drum.
- Two attendees participated in one vermicomposting workshop with the Ecology Action Center. Attendees left with a completed vermicompost bin with worms and educational information for how to properly care for the worms and harvest their compost.

Materials Borrowed

The Ecology Action Center offers trash grabbers and Clear Streams for residents to borrow.

- EAC loaned out equipment and supplies for a State Farm clean up activity.
- A local church borrowed four special event recycling containers for their rummage sale.

- Fifteen trash grabbers were loaned for a 4H group clean up.
- Two special event recycling containers were loaned to the U-High Cross-Country team to use during their practices.
- The Unitarian Universalists Church borrowed four special event recycling containers for their annual music event; EAC provided an information table on recycling and other topics.

MCLEAN UP CREW VOLUNTEERING

The mCLEAN up crew volunteer workdays remove litter from McLean County to reduce pollution. The Ecology Action Center coordinates volunteers at locations throughout the community to collect and properly dispose of waste, leaving areas better than they found them.

- Normal
 - Nine Boy Scouts picked up 10 bags of trash (approximately 200 pounds), vinyl siding, drain tiles, and a rusted barbeque around Raab Road in Normal.
 - Eighteen volunteers picked up 185 bags of trash (approximately 3,700 pounds) along Sugar Creek near the AutoZone on South Center as part of a partnership with Home Sweet Home Ministries and the Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District.
 - Eight volunteers picked up 113 bags of trash (approximately 2,260 pounds), completing the cleanup at Sugar Creek near the AutoZone on South Center.
 - Two volunteers cleaned up six bags of trash (120 pounds) on the Constitution Trail in Normal between South Madison and South Allin Street.
 - Thirteen Sustainable State volunteers collected four bags of trash (80 pounds) from People's Park in Normal.
 - Seven For a Better Tomorrow volunteers collected six bags of trash (120 pounds) near Normal Public Works.
- Bloomington
 - Three volunteers picked up 10 bags of trash (200 pounds), one tv set, one couch, cushions and pillows, and landscaping fabric near Morris Avenue in Bloomington.
 - Two volunteers picked up 10 bags of trash (200 pounds), styrofoam, and metal near the Quality Inn and Suites in Bloomington, as part of the Bring It Back to Normal ISU volunteer day.
 - Twenty-six community members picked up 26 bags of trash (520 pounds), four tires, and one tent from behind the Chateau in Bloomington as part of the Earth Day Clean Up.
 - Sixteen volunteers worked 102 hours over 12 shifts and collected one ton of recyclables at the McLean County Fair.
- McLean County
 - Twenty-seven volunteers picked up 38 bags of trash (760 pounds) at the Illinois State University Farm in Lexington.



- Five community members completed the Illinois State University Farm clean up, picking up the final six bags of trash (120 pounds).

MARKETING & OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Recycling & Waste interactions:
 - Recycle Coach recycling information application had 405,193 interactions.
 - Answered 750 phone calls, emails, and other inquiries about the disposal of household hazardous waste and recycling.
 - Promoted waste reduction, recycling, composting, and proper disposal of household hazardous waste through social media. Resulting in 545,816 views.
- Radio Interviews:
 - Interviewed with WJBC reaching approximately 1,000 listeners, topics discussed were backyard composting, vermicomposting, and community composting.
 - Interviewed with WJBC about plastic recycling, the McLean County Fair, and borrowing Clear Streams from the EAC for recycling receptacles, totaling 1,000 impressions.
 - Interviewed with WJBC discussing the 2025 HHW collection event, which reached an estimated 1,000 people.
 - Reached an estimated 1,000 listeners with a WJBC interview to celebrate the 2024 McLean County recycling rate of 51%.
 - Interviewed with WJBC to discuss the PaintCare program in Illinois and local drop-off locations. Reached an estimated 1,000 listeners.
- Print and Online Promotions:
 - Advertised for Earth Day in the Pantagraph about EAC programs. Totaled 10,423 impressions digitally and the print portion reached and estimated 21,000 readers.
 - Sent a flyer to 10,769 Unit 5 and District 87 families asking for volunteers for upcoming Clean Up projects.
 - Ran two full page ads in the Pantagraph to promote the upcoming HHW collection event, reaching an estimated 4,200 readers and a total of 21,015 digital impressions.
 - Ran two ads on WGLT promoting the upcoming HHW collection event, the ad reached an estimated 3,000 listeners and digital marketing totaled 10,000 impressions.
 - Ran two ads on WJBC that reached an estimated 10,500 people to promote the upcoming 2025 HHW collection event.
 - Ran an ad on WBNQ promoting the upcoming HHW collection event, reaching an estimated 14,100 people.
 - Ran a full-page ad in the Normalite to promote the upcoming HHW collection event, reaching approximately 5,000 readers.
 - Distributed HHW event flyers/postcards to 82 area locations.
 - Coordinated the distribution of 200 HHW collection event flyers on to-go/delivery pizza boxes.
 - Ran a Facebook ad to congratulate the McLean County community on a recycling rate over 50%. Reach is included in social media numbers above.
 - Ran a Facebook ad to inform residents of the PaintCare program, with reach included in social media numbers above.

- Newsletters:
 - Produced a second quarter EAC member newsletter featuring an article on pharmaceutical drop-offs and recycling. Mailed to 268 households in June.
 - Produced a third quarter EAC member newsletter featuring articles related to vape disposal and the upcoming McLean County HHW collection event on October 4, 2025. Mailed to 264 households in September.
 - Produced a fourth quarter EAC member newsletter featuring articles related to the PaintCare program that became available to Illinois residents starting December 1, 2025. Mailed to 248 households in December.
 - Sent monthly issues of the EAC Action News email newsletters to 2,272 email addresses to promote general recycling and waste reduction.
 - January's newsletter included information about waste management and the composition of waste generated in McLean County.
 - February's newsletter brought attention to complications of "wish-cycling" and steps to take to make sure that only accepted items are being recycled.
 - April's newsletter included information about the environmental harms of using a garbage disposal for food waste, and encouraged composting as a more sustainable alternative.
 - May's newsletter explained Resin Identification Codes on plastics and why they are not reliable for determining whether a plastic item is recyclable locally. The newsletter included information on McLean County acceptable plastics for recycling and pointed toward RecycleBN.org for more information.
 - July's newsletter included information about chemical recycling and its environmental risks, including air pollution and toxic waste.
 - August's newsletter included information on proper fuel canister recycling.
 - October's newsletter highlighted pumpkin composting, and included local events and drop offs like the Pumpkin Smash at Radar Family Farms and ISU's Office of Sustainability composting receptacles.
 - November's newsletter highlighted McLean County's 51% recycling rate from 2024, which was the first time the County has exceeded 50%.