



MEDIA CONTACTS

Cyndra Dietz, Director of School Recycling and Environmental Education Programs
303.444.6634, ext. 122; email: cld@ecocycle.org
Harlin Savage, Director of Communications
303.444.6634, ext. 107; email: harlin@ecocycle.org

Eco-Cycle's Award-Winning Green Star Schools Program Celebrates 10th Anniversary

*Nationally recognized program brings Zero Waste education to K-12 students in nearly half of all
Boulder County public schools*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Boulder County, CO (October 26, 2015) – Eco-Cycle's Green Star Schools program kicks off its 10-year anniversary celebration this week and next with special events at the four Boulder County elementary schools where the program began. Of the county's 82 public schools, 40 are now Green Star Schools with 27 more on a wait list to join the popular sustainability program, widely known as the most comprehensive Zero Waste schools project in the nation.

"Our ultimate goal is to have every school and every grade level in Boulder Valley and St. Vrain Valley School Districts enrolled," said Cyndra Dietz, Director of Eco-Cycle's School Recycling and Environmental Education Programs. "We want to move each school as close as possible to Zero Waste, and we want students to be inspired and to carry Zero Waste practices to their families and throughout their lives."

PHOTO OPS TUESDAY, THURSDAY AND NEXT WEEK

The first pilot Green Star Schools—Douglass Elementary, Horizons K-8, Boulder Community School of Integrated Studies and High Peaks Elementary—will celebrate with assemblies featuring HawkQuest showcasing live birds of prey to help students connect recycling and composting with saving natural resources and reducing pollution, which benefits wildlife and habitats.

Dr. Bruce Messinger, Superintendent of Boulder Valley School District, will be on hand to demonstrate the flight patterns of hawks, eagles and owls. Waste reduction games and contests for staff and students will also be part of the fun.

"Eco-Cycle is working to make Zero Waste a way of life for the next generation," said Michele Melio, Green Star Schools Project Manager. "We tackle every aspect of a school's waste stream helping students and staff get creative about ways to reduce waste, recycle and compost."

What's special about the Green Star Schools program that makes it unique in the nation?

- Compostables are collected throughout the entire school, including lunchrooms, kitchens, classrooms, offices and restrooms (paper towels).
- Waste reduction is emphasized (in addition to composting and recycling).
- Zero Waste becomes part of the school culture and daily routine as students and staff become fully engaged and invested.
- Eco-Cycle provides extensive and ongoing support, environmental education, special projects and incentives/rewards to participating schools.

As a result of the program, participating schools are recycling and composting an average of two-thirds of their discards instead of sending them to the landfill. Students and staff are learning to be good environmental stewards and they're taking their knowledge and new behaviors home to share with their families.

Increased environmental literacy and behavior changes that lead to reduced waste are a key focus of the program. Students participating in the Green Star Schools program gain insight into how their decisions and actions affect the environment, and they learn to think critically about their own consumption. They also gain the tools they need to take action to keep our environment healthy and sustainable for the future.

The Green Star Schools program strives to be as inclusive as possible. Currently, 25 percent of Green Star students are part of the free and reduced lunch program (low income), and nearly 29 percent are from populations of color. New schools added this year include Indian Peaks Elementary in Longmont, which has a student population that is 96 percent low-income and 95 percent Latino.

Before 2010, the Green Star Schools program was primarily focused on the elementary level until Eco-Cycle started to get dozens of requests from middle school staff, parents and, most importantly, student graduates of Green Star elementary schools—a sure sign of success.

Today, graduates of the pilot middle schools are entering high school and asking for Zero Waste opportunities for their schools. Thus far, to serve an older age group, Eco-Cycle has added four middle schools and one high school to the program.

Lack of funding is a big part of the reason why so many schools are still on the wait list. Launching a new Green Star School takes a significant initial investment of time and money to create the necessary infrastructure, include bins in every classroom, print signage and training and educational materials for staff, teachers and students, among other things. Altogether that adds up to about \$15,000 per school.

For more information, see the fact sheet below and visit: <http://ecocycle.org/schools/greenstarschools>

###

QUICK FACTS ABOUT GREEN STAR SCHOOLS, 2014-2015 SCHOOL YEAR

- Four new Green Star Schools were launched—Hygiene Elementary in Hygiene, Gold Hill Elementary in Gold Hill, Mapleton Early Childhood Education in Boulder and Pioneer Elementary in Lafayette. For a complete list of Green Star Schools and sponsors, visit: <http://ecocycle.org/schools/greenstarschools>
- 16,297 participating students
- 1,949 participating staff
- More than 200 tons of compost collected from schools and diverted from the landfill
- More than 150 tons of recyclables collected and processed at the Boulder County Recycling Center

