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Working to Build Zero Waste Communities

Volume 34, No. 2 Winter 2010 / 2011

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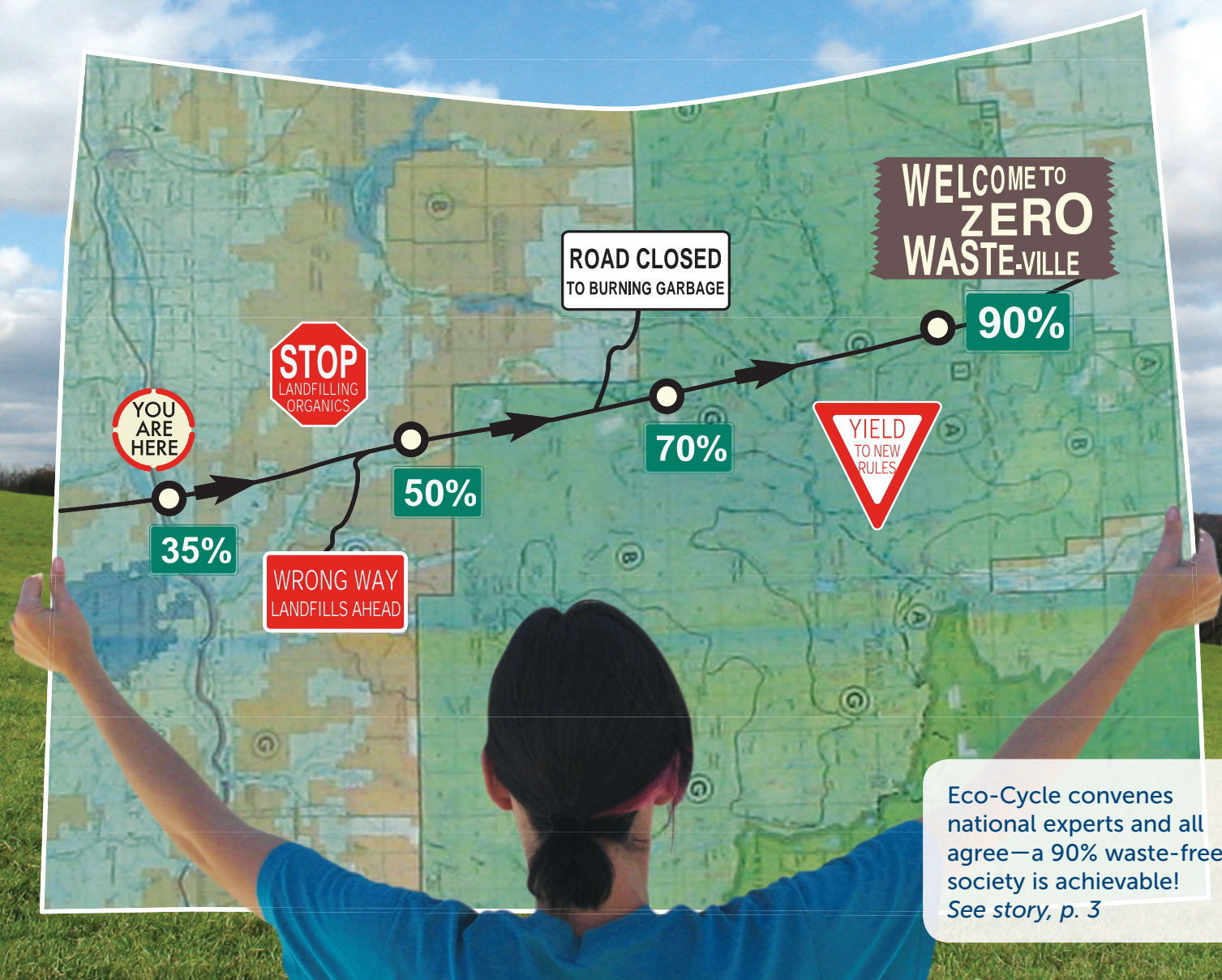
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Eco-Cycle convenes national experts and all agree—a 90% waste-free society is achievable! See story, p. 3

THE BIG PICTURE

Director's Corner



Notes From a Naive American

And now for something completely different — a patriotic and optimistic moment. My Zero Waste work often takes me to other countries and cultures, and as I travel I'm frequently met with the same cliché opinion of Americans (one of them, anyway). Once on a Zero Waste venture in France, I was trying to convince an activist about the value of creating a Zero Waste society. She eventually looked at me with almost pity in her eyes and said, "You Americans are amazing. You really do believe there is a solution to every problem."

I guess she's right. As a culture, we always see solutions. It's that kind of naive, perhaps childish, optimism that has, despite some of our faults, led to some significant global innovations (walking on the moon, for one). Call it what you will, but it may be that characteristic that leads to a true Zero Waste society, a goal that may be more difficult to reach in the context of another culture.

Experts agree: 90% is achievable

I wanted to find out if I am childish or naive to believe that the transition to a Zero Waste world is going to be as regenerative to our economy and environment as I believe it to be. So, Eco-Cycle got a foundation grant to fly nine national Zero Waste leaders from San Francisco, Seattle, Austin, San Diego, New York and elsewhere into Boulder, where we spent two days wrestling with one critical question: Can we get to a 90% waste-free society, or are we dreaming? (see story p. 3). The answer is cause for celebration, optimism and, in my opinion, patriotism because it's going to take a lot of "Red, White and Blue can-do spirit" to get there.

While Europe seems to have decided that a 70% recycling rate is good enough, and that burning the remaining 30% is *the* formula, I am thrilled to report that our "Getting to Zero Waste Summit" group decided

“Can we get to a 90% waste-free society, or are we dreaming? The answer to that question is cause for celebration, optimism and, in my opinion, patriotism because it's going to take a lot of "Red, White and Blue can-do spirit" to get there.”



Eric Lombardi
Executive Director

unanimously that a 90% waste-free society is attainable in every way — technologically, economically and socially. The group also concluded that this is not a distant dream but rather an immediate opportunity that is both affordable and badly needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on a significant scale.

But will it fly in City Hall?

Is a waste-free society *politically* attainable in America? *That's* the issue the group found to be a struggle. The Zero Waste future requires the creation of a "profitable business environment," so that investment funds flow into building the new Zero Waste infrastructure needed for success.

Unfortunately, this is where our childish nature keeps us from our goal. We throw a fit about the idea of creating niche business environments that reward certain activities. In contrast to our hands-off capitalism, when the EU decided to radically reduce landfilling for public health and environmental reasons, the government of Ireland didn't wring its hands trying to figure out how to give birth to the new recycling and composting

businesses needed to replace landfills. The Irish government simply raised the price of landfilling significantly, assuming that the new industries — recycling and composting — would emerge from the minds of Irish entrepreneurs, which they have! That sort of progressive policy creation requires leadership, a vision for the common good and, dare I say, a more mature dialogue about community responsibility, which is something America has been lacking since the 1980s.

So, now here's the big question: Is American-style democracy up to the challenge of going beyond small incremental change and therefore capable of making large systemic changes to the way our society functions? I see the issue of Zero Waste as a perfect stage to play out this "Act of Human Social Evolution." Now we know that Eco-Cycle isn't alone in thinking this way; there are at least nine influential Zero Waste thought-leaders who are also working every day to build a waste-free future. Together, we are all going forward with the conviction that there IS a solution to this problem, and YES WE CAN.

Eco-Cycle's mission is to identify, explore and demonstrate the emerging frontiers of sustainable resource management through the concepts and practices of Zero Waste. We believe in individual and community action to transform society's throw-away ethic into environmentally-responsible stewardship.

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Eco-Cycle
P.O. Box 19006 • Boulder, CO 80308
Phone: 303-444-6634
Fax: 303-444-6647

www.ecocycle.org
e-mail: recycle@ecocycle.org

Eco-Cycle is a member of the National Recycling Coalition, the Boulder, Broomfield and Longmont Chambers of Commerce, the GrassRoots Recycling Network, Colorado Association for Recycling, Zero Waste International Alliance, P3, Social Enterprise Alliance and Community Shares of Colorado.

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Is a 90% waste-free society achievable?

Eco-Cycle convenes national experts to plot the course.

Zero Waste is at a critical point — it has the opportunity to become the norm, rather than the exception, around the globe. Some cities across the U.S. and Canada are diverting 70% or more of their discards from the landfill. Regions in Europe are exceeding 85%. Clearly, we no longer have to figure out HOW to recover our resources. What we need for Zero Waste to reach its potential is to answer two questions: Why aren't we all capturing 70% or more of our discards when these communities have paved the way? And, after we get to 70%, can we get to the 90% diversion rate that defines a Zero Waste Community?

Eco-Cycle decided it was time to gather the experts. In April, we hosted the **Getting to Zero Waste Summit**, a historic meeting of nine of our most respected and accomplished Zero Waste colleagues from around the nation (and one from Canada). We combined our thinking with theirs to accomplish two tasks: 1) Create a template to help "Any Town, USA" map their way to the clearly achievable goal of 70%; and 2) Determine if 90% is possible, and, if it is, how a community gets there.

When our Executive Director Eric Lombardi placed the invitation calls for the Summit, the reaction was the same each time: "Yes! I would be honored to come! I need to answer these questions for my community, too." And, if anyone was up to the task, it was these nine experts. They are public leaders who are creating and implementing cutting edge Zero Waste programs in their respective communities, including San Francisco, Oakland, San Diego, New York, Austin, Vermont, Seattle and Toronto. Joining with Eco-Cycle staffers Eric, Marti and Kate, the Zero Waste Dozen went to work.

We worked intensely for two days, up at Chautauqua in the day and at our local Zero Waste Boulder Outlook Hotel & Suites at night. Not only were the cameras clicking at

our beautiful Flatirons, but our guests were also snapping photos of what they found at the Outlook: a big banner advertising their Zero Waste hotel, recycling bins and compost bags in each room, bikes for rent, reusable water bottles available at a cheap price and a chlorine-free pool.

During day one, we tackled our first task and created a template that will help any community achieve a 70% landfill diversion rate in less than seven years. As we brainstormed, we repeatedly asked ourselves, "But will it work in Kansas?" to make sure our recommendations were replicable anywhere. The results will be important for us locally because the city of Boulder has a goal of achieving 85% diversion by 2017, and we're less than halfway there! The template we created is being written up for a national magazine later this year.

Nine out of nine experts agree: 90% recovery is possible!

Then we asked the question that brought us all together: "Is 90% really possible?" The question didn't land lightly. These experts work every day in the trenches; they don't just theorize about what should be done. For this group to say, "Yes, it's possible," would mean that all of us would have to go back to our respective communities and make it happen. In the closing hours of the Summit, it was an exciting, hopeful and historic-feeling moment when the group reached the consensus, "Yes, it is indeed possible." So, we set to work on what that would look like — what more would we need to do to move beyond 70% and get to 90%?

Getting to 90%

What does it take to get to 90%? We need to live by some new rules that support Zero Waste over polluting and wasting practices. Mandatory recycling and composting at all homes and businesses is first and foremost.

In Boulder, we have given everyone 34 YEARS to get on the voluntary recycling bus. Residents are almost all onboard, but businesses are FAR behind, recovering only 25% of their waste! Communities hitting higher diversion goals have acknowledged that wasting resources can no longer be seen as an option or a right.

That approach extends to manufacturers, as well, who must design their products for recovery, not for the dump. All products and packaging must be reusable, recyclable or compostable, use fewer resources and contain no toxins. Products must come in little to no packaging, and packaging must be standardized to make it easier for recycling facilities to market recycled materials. Product labels must include clear symbols indicating whether a product is designed for the recycling bin (with a blue dot perhaps) or for the compost bin (with a green dot) so that proper sorting is made simple.

Strong, publicly-accountable infrastructure to capture and process these materials, as well as financial structures that promote recovery and punish wasting, are the driving forces in communities nearing or surpassing 70% recovery. Aggressive construction and demolition debris recycling is also a must, and has been done successfully in other cities through deposits on building permits.

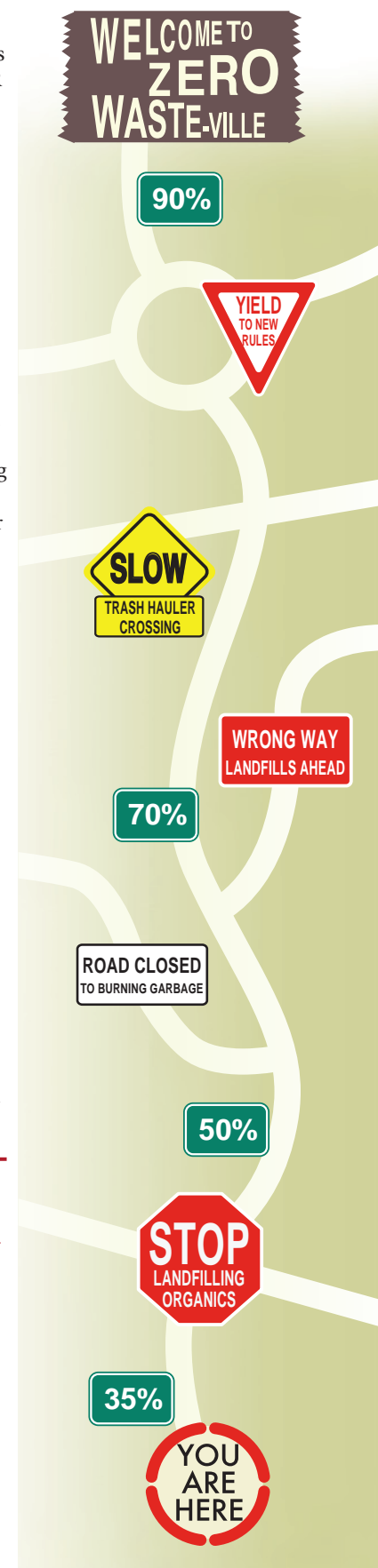
Our recent gathering of Zero Waste experts was only the beginning. Eco-Cycle plans to share the results of the Summit, including a template for getting to 50%, 70% and 90%, in a white paper due out at the end of 2010. Eco-Cycle also has plans to expand our Zero Waste panel of experts and convene more meetings here in Boulder in the future. Now that we really know (and are not just taking it on faith) that 90% recovery of our discarded resources is possible, we see new doors opening to build a stronger green economy in Boulder County, the U.S. and beyond.

Thanks to the Oreg Foundation for providing the funding to fly in our nine Zero Waste experts for our *Getting to Zero Waste Summit*.

Sign up to receive our *Getting to Zero Waste Summit* white paper, due out by the end of 2010, by sending an e-mail to kate@ecocycle.org, subject: white paper request.

Thanks to Boulder Outlook Hotel & Suites owner Dan King for giving us a deep discount and wonderful experience for our Summit!

View interviews from the Summit at www.ecocycle.org/zerowaste.



Planning an upscale event? New from Eco-Cycle®

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Who says environmentalists don't know how to party in style?



RECYCLING GUIDELINES UPDATES

Straight From Our Sorters to You

Here are updates and tips to help keep our single-stream recyclables clean.

Once your recyclables show up at the Boulder County Recycling Center, Eco-Cycle staff members separate and prepare your materials for sale. Our marketers are the first to learn of new recycling opportunities, and our sorters see, firsthand, contamination issues we need to fix. Here are the latest updates from the front lines:



RECYCLING UPDATE ALERT:

It's now OK to recycle plastic caps from plastic bottles and jugs as long as they are attached to the container and as long as the plastic bottle or jug is *empty*.

What??! That's right. After 20 years of telling you not to do this, it is now OK.

Here's why: The bottle recycling plants say they can now recycle these caps, so now 100% of a plastic bottle or jug is recyclable!

Please NO

- Plastic caps or lids of ANY kind on GLASS bottles and jars
- Loose plastic caps or lids
- Flat lids on plastic tubs



photo credits: Leigh Cushing



Watch a video of the sorting equipment in action at www.ecocycle.org.

CONTAMINATION ALERT: Please don't flatten containers



To help the single-stream sorting process work correctly, please do not step on or flatten aluminum cans, milk cartons, paper soy milk boxes, plastic bottles or any other food or beverage container.

Here's why: You may have wondered how single-stream materials get separated, now that paper and containers come to us mixed together. The separation is done primarily with a series of sorting equipment. The first piece of equipment is designed to separate two-dimensional, or "flat," paper materials like paperboard, newspapers and office paper from three-dimensional, or "round," food and beverage containers.

The key is that the containers need to stay three-dimensional. If containers are flattened, the equipment misreads them as two-dimensional and incorrectly sorts them in with the paper, where they become a significant contaminant. So, please help the flats stay "flat" and the rounds stay "round."

CONTAMINATION ALERT:

Please NO medical sharps or medical waste

This would seem obvious, but from time to time we see these materials on the sorting line, primarily inside detergent bottles. Because having this happen even once is too much, we must emphasize that medical sharps (needles) should NOT go in your recycling bin, nor should syringes, test tubes, latex gloves, etc.

Here's why: Plastic bottles containing sharps break open, posing a significant threat to recycling sorters who use their hands to spread materials out. Workers are using steel enforced gloves, but there can be no tolerance for exposure to medical waste. Sharps pose a threat to trash workers as well. Materials like syringes, tubes and gloves are not recyclable and, even worse, may be biohazards.

Learn more: Please check with your medical services provider (including your veterinarian) for disposal boxes and safe disposal programs for sharps. For more information on how to safely handle sharps, please visit our A to Z Recycling Guide at www.ecocycle.org/htrg and scroll down to Sharps.



SO, you say you want to do more for the environment but don't have time and aren't sure what you can DO?



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www.ecocycle.org

Questions? E-mail us at recycle@ecocycle.org, or give us a call at 303-444-6634.



Quick Updates

Why buy when you can rent? New Tool Library coming this fall



Need a saw, but don't want to buy one just to use it once? ReSource's new Tool Library is here to help. Open to residents, non-profits and civic entities in Boulder County, the Tool Library will house more than 1,000 basic tools related to carpentry, gardening, plumbing and more. For a nominal fee, we can share resources rather than each owning our own, lessen our environmental impact, put tools in the hands of those with limited means and build community. The Tool Library will be located next to ReSource at 6400 Arapahoe Ave. in Boulder. It's slated to open in October 2010. Learn more at www.resourceyard.org.

Plan for a Zero Waste Boulder County

After adopting the goal in 2005, Boulder County staff members are putting the finishing touches on a plan to get us to Zero Waste by 2025. What's on the agenda? With county residents recycling about 30% of their materials (on par with the national average), and less than 15 years to become a national leader, much of the plan focuses on helping municipalities improve their residential recycling and composting programs. The plan also calls for the need to look into more infrastructure to recover organic discards with commercial composting facilities and to recycle construction materials with more programs like ReSource. More participation and dedication from businesses is also crucial. It's critical for the county to demonstrate a serious commitment to its Zero Waste target and enable municipalities to take bold steps to get us there — otherwise, we'll be nothing more than average wasters.



New Hazardous Materials Management Facility coming in 2011



photo credit: Leigh Cushing

Facility and will be expanded to provide services to businesses along with residents. It will also have an indoor retail center for customers to browse and purchase reusable products like paint. This brings us one step closer to a Zero Waste Park, with ReSource, the recycling center, and soon, the CHaRM, within a half mile of one another. The only thing missing is a commercial composting facility. Read more about the new HMM facility in the next issue of the *Eco-Cycle Times*.

Boulder County manufacturers out front in green packaging revolution

Eldorado Springs is the first U.S. bottled spring-water company to use a 100% post-consumer recycled plastic bottle. Made from the same #1 PET bottles you throw in your recycling bin, this bottle leaps past the competition and their paltry 10% recycled content, and saves 77% of the energy used to make a plastic bottle from natural gas. On the other side of the grocery store, **Boulder Canyon Chips** is sporting a 100% compostable chip bag made from wood pulp sourced from responsibly-managed plantations. Traditional chip bags are made from multiple layers of petroleum-derived plastic films which can't be separated for recycling. Compost your Boulder Canyon Chips bag through your curbside composting bin, after you finish every salty crumb.



Community



photo credit: Leigh Cushing

Recycle it Right!
¡Recíclalo bien!

Thanks to the *Recycle it Right!* program, Longmont's Casa de la Esperanza housing facility went from recycling 0% to 40% of their discards in just 8 months!

Longmont's *Recycle it Right!* Campaign Takes Off

The city of Longmont and Eco-Cycle have teamed up to offer a new influx of recycling programs and resources to help move Longmont closer to Zero Waste. *Want to participate?* We'd love to hear from you! Just call or e-mail Eco-Cycle's Longmont Campaigns Coordinator, Julie Hayes, at 303-772-7300, ext. 120, or julie@ecocycle.org.

Recycling tips and guidelines delivered straight to your door

Armed with *Recycle it Right!* door hangers and guidelines, Eco-Cycle volunteer Block Leaders and staff have traveled door-to-door to more than 6,000 Longmont homes in an ongoing effort to help residents learn what is accepted and not accepted in single-stream recycling carts.

Now presenting... how to *Recycle it Right!*

With a basket of recyclables and contaminants in hand, Eco-Cycle staff have shared essential recycling facts and tips with more than 300 Longmont residents, students and business groups, including the Longmont Rotary Club, Longmont Neighborhood Group Leaders Association, Longmont Area Human Resources Round Table, Front Range Community College and many others. Call us for a presentation to your group!

Neighborhood competes, brings out the best in recycling

Longmont's Sugarmill Farms neighborhood divided into east side vs. west side to take part in the first ever *Recycle it Right!* competition. The rules? The team with the most garbage-free recycling bins wins. And the winner was... the west side with 63%! Congrats to the east side for putting up a fight and getting to 41%. To celebrate, Eco-Cycle threw the whole neighborhood a Zero Waste block party.

Casa de la Esperanza sets the bar for apartment recycling programs

The housing complex's 32 families went from recycling 0% of their waste up to 40% in just 8 months! Eco-Cycle volunteers and staff were there to guide them through the process with recycling events like presentations, paint-your-own recycling bin activities, waste monitoring and more. Check out our video on how Casa started to *Recycle it Right!* by visiting www.ecocycle.org and clicking on "Longmont" under "Choose your local center."

Apartment complex and condo recycling resources

Are you an apartment-dwelling recycler with no recycling services where you live? Fret no more: The city and Eco-Cycle are here to help. We can provide tenants and property managers with everything they need to get on board and start recycling, solve common challenges and potentially reduce trash costs. Just give us a ring (see contact information above).

Ask Tee-Cee

Why can't drinking glasses go in your recycling bin? How can you get rid of junk mail? These questions and more are answered every Monday in the *Longmont Times-Call* "Tee-Cee" Green Monkey column. Check it out and send your questions to marti@ecocycle.org.

Longmont Ledger columns

Check out Eco-Cycle's monthly columns in the *Longmont Ledger* for local Zero Waste happenings, ways to live an eco-friendly lifestyle in Longmont and more.

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WE RECYCLE



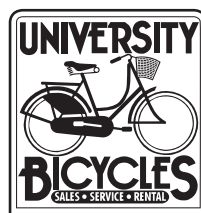
WE COMPOST

WE USE ZERO WASTE
PURCHASING PRACTICESWE RECYCLE
HARD-TO-RECYCLE
MATERIALS

Look for
these stickers
around town
to see which businesses
are going for Zero Waste
with Eco-Cycle

What does it take to be a Zero Waste business?

We asked three of our local stars to give us the scoop on the challenges, successes and joys of going for Zero Waste.



University Bicycles

839 Pearl St., Boulder
(303) 444-4196
www.ubikes.com

University Bicycles opened its doors in 1985 and is the first known bike shop in the state to go for Zero Waste.

Lester Binegar, General Manager

On why they're going for Zero Waste:

We started the program in 2010 because our staff is totally into it. Most of us ride our bikes to work every day and love the outdoors, so what better way to contribute to the environment and our community than making sure we aren't needlessly tossing stuff into the landfill.

On recycling nontraditional items:

We go through a ton of bicycle tires and plastic bags from all the packaging that we receive, and you can't put this stuff in your regular recycling bin. But after we set up a hard-to-recycle program with Eco-Cycle, we were able to divert all of this waste from the landfill.

On their successes so far:

We used to recycle very little. Now we're diverting 50% of our waste. That's pretty cool!

Advice to businesses:

Get your employees onboard in the beginning by making sure they understand what items go in which bins and why. It's important that the system you set up is organized — ours is color-coordinated. Once in place, it's flawless after that and you will wonder why you didn't do it sooner.



Green Garage

1433 Pearl St., Boulder
(303) 991-5650
www.greengarage.com

Green Garage is the only eco-friendly and Zero Waste full-service auto repair shop in the country.

Catherine Greener, VP of Sustainability

On recycling nontraditional items:

Eco-Cycle was able to help us divert spark plugs and wheel weights from the waste stream through its hard-to-recycle program, and they have also helped us research ways to divert other parts that are left over when servicing a car. It is a great partnership, and we hope to continue to find ways to minimize the waste that results from a service or repair.

On what other auto repair shops should know about going for Zero Waste:

It is important to build partnerships with organizations that can help find ways to recapture the materials from the automotive waste stream. At Green Garage, part of our business model is to demonstrate what is possible in reducing waste in the auto repair industry because this industry has never been known for being sustainable, and we want to change that.

On Zero Waste goals:

We are not stopping. We want to continue to explore end-of-life options for all our products and be on the forefront of what it means to be a Zero Waste automotive center.



HospiceCare of Boulder and Broomfield Counties

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(303) 604-5353

www.hospicecareonline.org
HospiceCare is Colorado's first and the area's only non-profit hospice.

Myra Mussack, Fund Development Coordinator

On the best way to initiate Zero Waste within the company:

A business should have a champion of its Zero Waste efforts to garner widespread organizational support, and it must come from the top. It's not enough just to have staff support because only the company leaders can hold people accountable and change the overall culture of waste.

On adopting new Zero Waste practices like composting:

At first, it was hard for people to grasp because it was novel. They would ask, "Can I really compost these food scraps?" But now they have adopted composting and the program has taken off.

On the importance of Zero Waste training and education:

We could not have been successful at Zero Waste without assistance and the signs, bin placement, training and education Eco-Cycle provided us.

Advice to businesses:

Be patient. It takes time to phase out old habits and phase in new ones. Changing an organization's behavior toward sustainability is a constant evolution, and going for Zero Waste demonstrated to us how we could move toward becoming a more sustainable organization. As a result, we have recently adopted other green policies for our agency.

Students Tour Zero Waste Businesses, Prepare for Green Economy

by Iris Sela



Skyline High School students visit Zero Waste business Boulder Ice Cream to see the ins and outs of running an eco-sustainable business.

High school business students in Boulder and Broomfield Counties are getting a sneak peek into what will hopefully be their future.

Through Eco-Cycle's school programs, they're taking field trips to get hands-on experience with some of our best local Zero Waste businesses, and learning for themselves how someday they might run an environmentally- and financially-sustainable company. Today, the businesses they are visiting are the exception, but these aspiring young entrepreneurs may one day be an integral part of making Zero Waste business as usual.

"This program is particularly powerful because it helps younger generations see firsthand how their daily choices and actions impact the environment, and how, with the right information and tools, they can make a difference for the better," says Deanna Bratter, Manager of Responsible Livelihood at WhiteWave Foods Company, which is the principal sponsor of the project.

Students also participate in Eco-Cycle presentations that highlight the main principles of Zero Waste, Zero Waste initiatives developing around the world, and how businesses can do their part to help build a Zero Waste community.

Accompanied by an Eco-Cycle educator, the classes tour the four businesses listed below—a vet clinic, an ice-cream shop, a hotel, and an internet and software giant—to have an in-person look at how various industries can do their part for the planet. Here's a sampling of what students are learning:

- Along with implementing significant waste reduction initiatives, **Aspen Meadow Veterinary**

Specialists is the first vet hospital in Colorado to be certified by Partners for a Clean Environment (PACE), is 100% wind powered, and is the first LEED-certified vet clinic in the country.

- The ice cream connoisseurs at **Boulder Ice Cream** use only "real foods" to flavor their rBGH-free ice cream. They divert 70% of their discards through reuse, recycling and composting, and use compostable materials when distributing ice cream samples at local events. Their facility is 100% wind powered and their trucks are powered by biodiesel.
- As Boulder's first Zero Waste hotel, **Boulder Outlook Hotel & Suites** has reported an increase in revenue due to its eco-friendly initiatives. The hotel uses non-toxic cleaning products, energy-efficient light bulbs and recycled-content paper products. It also features a chlorine-free pool, solar panels, and recycling and compost containers in each room.
- The staff at **Google's** Boulder office created a Green Committee to tackle its Zero Waste and Zero Carbon efforts. To cut down on multiple trips, employees bring their electronics, shoes, block foam and other hard-to-recycle items to work to be transported to the CHaRM for recycling in one fell swoop.

"We think students will benefit from seeing, firsthand, how doing the right thing and success are not mutually exclusive," said Allison Floyd, Software Engineer at Google. "In fact, Google has often found that environmentally-conscious options make the most business sense."

Schools

Five Years of Green Stars

We're excited to announce that 30% of Boulder County public schools—24 schools in all—are making Zero Waste a part of daily school life with Eco-Cycle's Green Star Schools program!

By composting food scraps and non-recyclable paper, collecting traditional recyclables and hard-to-recycle items like electronics and books, and engaging in a variety of waste reduction projects, these schools are diverting an average of two-thirds of all their waste from the landfill. Green Star Schools are located throughout Boulder County including in Boulder, Lafayette, Louisville, Longmont, Lyons, Nederland and Niwot.

Five years ago, this first-in-the-nation program was launched in four ambitious schools. These four schools—Boulder Community School of Integrated Studies, Douglass Elementary, High Peaks Elementary and Horizons K-8—will celebrate five years as Zero Waste champions in fall 2010 with awards presented by Boulder Valley School District Superintendent Chris King, the Boulder County Commissioners and Eco-Cycle.

To learn more about Eco-Cycle's school programs in Boulder Valley and St. Vrain schools, please visit www.ecocycle.org/atschool.



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- **PAPERMAKING WITH PIZZAZZ**
- **GREEN TEAMS:** X Games for the Earth

All parties include interactive and unique activities, games and take-home crafts. **WE CAN HELP MAKE YOUR PARTY ZERO WASTE!** Contact us for details.

Proceeds benefit Eco-Cycle's School Recycling and Environmental Education Programs. (A portion of the cost is tax-deductible.)

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Working to Build Zero Waste Communities



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www.ecocycle.org/kids/parties
303-444-6634 x 103
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Creating a Zero Waste Path for Higher Education



CU UPDATE

CU and Eco-Cycle are working together to provide the nation's colleges and universities with the guidelines, resources and evaluations they need to go for Zero Waste.

Campus communities have been leading the charge for renewable energy, green building and carbon offsets for years. Now, the nation's 4,000 colleges and universities represent a tremendous opportunity to advance Zero Waste, and CU and Eco-Cycle are teaming up to provide the guiding principles.

One of the main obstacles so far to reaching Zero Waste has been the absence of a clear definition, set of principles or guide that lays out the path for what it means to be a Zero Waste campus. Without these, the term and mission of Zero Waste can be misunderstood, and sometimes misused, by schools trying to become more environmentally sustainable.

Enter a team of CU student recyclers led by Jack DeBell, a 25-year veteran of CU's award-winning recycling program, and Eric Lombardi, Executive Director of Eco-Cycle and one of the world's leading Zero Waste experts. Together with the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), they are working to create a definitive set of global Zero Waste policies that can guide and evaluate programs established by institutes of higher education.

Lombardi and DeBell will facilitate a Zero Waste session at AASHE's October 2010 conference in Denver to help refine aspects of Zero Waste, while considering the unique challenges and opportunities on college campuses. This session will be shared on AASHE's discussion forum with the goal of creating a set of unifying principles by the end of the year. To stay informed and participate in this ongoing

discussion, visit www.aashe.org/forums/operations/waste.

One of the key principles the group is working on is defining a Zero Waste school as one that diverts 90% or more of the campus waste stream from the landfill (or incinerator) through waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting. Though this may seem a lofty goal, it is the constant push to decrease consumption and increase recovery over time that gets schools to Zero Waste, or darn near. Two online reporting sites have been created to accurately record and report schools' progress: EPA's WasteWise program and AASHE's STARS project.

Another key Zero Waste principle for universities is using environmental purchasing to reduce not only what gets thrown away, but also the total amount of materials used by the campus. CU is among a growing number of schools trying to drive down consumption. For instance, the university recently launched AI's Exchangeables, a program that offers students reusable to-go boxes for dining halls that can be exchanged throughout the semester.

Also in production is a student-led project at CU that will create a set of curriculum materials such as fact sheets, a glossary of Zero Waste terms, research resources, career placement services and sponsorship opportunities. To help contribute to this body of knowledge, contact Jack DeBell, Development Director for CU Recycling, at deb主@colorado.edu.

ZERO WASTE AROUND THE STATE

Quick Updates



How much do we recycle?

Experts thought Colorado lagged behind the rest of the country when it came to recycling participation, but without any data, it was really anyone's guess... until now. Thanks to a new law, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is collecting and reporting data for the first time, and the results are a bit bleak—**Colorado recycled less than 20% of its municipal waste in 2008, compared to a national average of 33%. We also threw away nearly 7.5 pounds of trash per person per day, far above the national average!** We're losing recycling job opportunities, burying resources and causing unnecessary pollution, and we need more state-wide leadership to put us on a new course for the 21st century.

Producer responsibility talks begin

Generally, the burden of recovering products and packaging through recycling is up to the consumer or local government. That may change with the recent creation of the **Colorado Product Stewardship Council**, which will work toward shifting responsibility for the recovery of some products to those who design, market and profit from them: the producers. This matters especially when a product (or packaging) is toxic or just not recyclable. To drive manufacturers to redesign their items for recovery, they must be the ones who will pay for end-of-life management, instead of local governments and taxpayers. In addition, consumers who buy toxic or non-recyclable items should also be subject to the "polluter pays" principle and see their costs rise according to their purchasing behavior. All of this is meant to reward clean industrial designers and environmentally-minded shoppers!

City of Golden launches affordable curbside recycling

Curbside recycling seems to be contagious along the Front Range, which is great news for the health of our economy and environment. **Following in the footsteps of Lafayette and Louisville, the city of Golden is the latest to provide curbside recycling and trash services to all its residents under a single-hauler contract, which means more services at a better price.** The new service comes in response to the city's drop-off center being continuously overwhelmed by residents' enthusiasm for recycling. Now Golden hopes to "catch" another benefit from its Boulder County neighbors—increased recycling rates.



Zero Waste climbs to new heights in Himalayas

"The world has not paid attention to the plight of the Himalayas, and we want the whole of humanity to know that the Himalayas are bearing the brunt of our wrongdoings."

That's the word from Anil Manandhar, of World Wildlife Fund Nepal, on the impact climate change is having on the highest mountain range in the world. In an effort to combat the mounting environmental damage, a coalition of 24 organizations has banded together under the banner of Zero Waste Himalayas. The group aims to reduce waste in India, Nepal and Bhutan through actions like calling for an immediate end to disposable plastic packaging and drafting a Zero Waste declaration.

Another complementary effort, the Eco Everest Expedition, has carried more than 26,000 pounds of trash and 660 pounds of human waste off the world's highest peak since 2008.



Seattle says NO to trashy food packaging

Banning Styrofoam® food containers was its first step toward making on-the-go eating Zero Waste. Now the city of Seattle has expanded the effort by requiring all businesses that sell or supply food to offer only reusable, recyclable or compostable food containers, utensils and the like. Now restaurants, fast food joints, cafés, delis, coffee shops, grocery stores, vending trucks and institutional cafeterias must also have recycling and composting services to collect these materials from customers to make sure these sustainability efforts don't go to waste... literally.

The city is getting plenty of help from its regional composting facility, which has found a new business opportunity in certifying which products are truly compostable so local businesses aren't fooled by greenwashing claims like "biodegradable" or "natural."



USA v. Scotland

Nevermind the soccer field: When it comes to the war against waste, Scotland's beating the U.S. hands down. The new Scottish Zero Waste plan has an incredibly progressive goal of keeping any material with reuse or recycling potential out of the landfill by 2020. Jump-starting the effort is the Love Food, Hate Waste campaign (www.lovefoodhatewaste.com), which encourages residents to be more conscious of their food consumption habits—it's estimated the average Scot throws out nearly \$700 worth of food every year. As for the United States, we scored a few points with President Obama's Executive Order on Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance, which establishes a 50% recycling goal for all federal agencies by 2015. But the President was quickly outcompeted by EPA Region 9 and its pledge to reach carbon neutrality and Zero Waste at its offices by 2012.



Quick Updates

Buried in garbage debt in Pennsylvania and Florida

Burning garbage to make energy may sound like a smokin' deal, but dig deeper and you'll find it's the local communities that are getting smoked.

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania is contemplating municipal bankruptcy, and, as reported by MSNBC and the *Wall Street Journal*, "most of the blame can be placed squarely on a single incinerator." Harrisburg owes \$68 million in interest for its incinerator, an amount larger than the city's annual budget.

Down in Lake County, Florida, fewer snowbirds from up north means less trash, and that amounts to trouble with the local waste burner. Most incinerators operate under "put or pay" contracts that require a minimum amount of trash every year. If Lake County can't deliver its annual 163,000 tons of trash, the situation "could potentially cost the county millions of dollars." County officials are soliciting trash from nearby counties and admitting, "We're not promoting recycling in a big way right now."

Take Action with Eco-Cycle

What can YOU do for a Zero Waste world? Lots of things! Here are just a few. Learn more at www.ecocycle.org.

- Join the Eco-Buzz Network and get weekly Zero Waste Living tips via e-mail to share with friends and family
- Use our online A-Z Recycling Guide (Not local? Check out www.earth911.org)
- Volunteer with Eco-Cycle and help distribute the *Eco-Cycle Times*
- Pass along this *Eco-Cycle Times* to a friend



Eco-Cycle wins 2010 Boulder Rotary ONE WORLD AWARD



Presented by the Boulder Rotary Club's Preserve Planet Earth Committee, the award was given to honor and recognize Eco-Cycle's important work and leadership in moving the community and world toward Zero Waste.

Green Your Pet

In our culture, pets are part of the family, so much so that in Boulder, the legal term for pet owners is “pet guardians!”

Unfortunately, our animal family members can be especially vulnerable to—and sometimes cause—environmental hazards. Here are some of our top tips for keeping your pet(s) happy, healthy and in sync with nature.

Flea and Tick Control

There are lots of natural alternatives to soaking our pets in pesticides. Try feeding your pet one tablet (or 1 tbsp.) of brewer’s yeast daily to give their skin a scent that fleas avoid. You can also comb your pets with a flea comb or place cedar wood chips around their bedding areas to repel insects.

Pets and Plastic



Many chew toys and other pet products are made from polyvinyl chloride, or PVC, the #3 plastic we like to refer to as

“the poison plastic.” Not only is PVC not recyclable, but it’s also far more toxic in production, use and disposal than any other plastic. Avoid any products with a #3, PVC, V, or vinyl label, and look for recycled plastic (#s 1, 2, 4, or 5) or rubber, hemp or organic cotton products instead. For chew toys, try natural products like rawhide and real bones to keep your pet from ingesting pieces of plastic. For a list of eco-friendly products, visit www.ecomall.com and click on “PETS.”

Non-Toxic Cleaning

Pets are very vulnerable to toxins in their environment, so be mindful of what you are using to clean your house, inside and out. Look for plant-based, non-toxic cleaning products or make your own eco-friendly cleaners using basic,

inexpensive ingredients like white vinegar, borax, baking soda, lemon juice, and castile soap. For a list of do-it-yourself cleaners, visit www.ecocycle.org and click on the menu link “Hazardous Waste” and then “Alternative Cleaners and Recipes.”

Feed Them Well

Choose high quality foods with certified-organic ingredients to reduce your pets’ exposure to pesticides and to give them the best chance for a long, healthy life. Organic foods are also free of chemical additives, preservatives, and artificial colors and flavors that can cause allergic reactions. Avoid foods that are not certified USDA-grade as these products have been considered “unfit for human consumption” and may contain meat from diseased animals.

The Poop Question

Do we really have to scoop dog poop? Yes, we do. Scooping poop is the law on public spaces for sanitary, aesthetic and very strong environmental reasons too. Dog waste poses a threat to local waterways, causing bacteria levels that upset algal growth and potentially harming fish and other animals dependent upon the water (like, say, humans). Dog waste left on the ground introduces high levels of nitrogen into the soils, which impede native plant growth and cause harmful weeds to flourish. So, scoop the poop and put it in the trash (or, see special alternatives below).

Composting Pet Waste

First things first: Pet waste **CANNOT** be placed in your curbside or backyard compost bin. The pathogens and parasites within the waste are not properly treated or removed under most composting conditions. **Dog waste:** You can compost dog waste at home using a special process that involves digging a hole and applying septic tank enzymes to help the poop break down and flow into the subsoil. Dog waste compost should never be used on or near food crops. Visit



photo credit: Leigh Cushing

www.cityfarmer.org/petwaste.html for how to make your own composter and where to buy kits, or look for special composting facilities at your local dog park. **Cat waste,** on the other hand, cannot be composted because pathogens in the waste can pose a serious health threat to humans and can make their way into our waterways.

Flushing Pet Waste

Here’s the long and the short of it: The folks at the Boulder Wastewater Treatment Facility say that dog waste is similar enough to human waste that it is safe to flush down the toilet. But they also want to be clear that residents should never flush bags (whether they are plastic, paper, or labeled compostable or biodegradable) as they don’t break down quickly, clog equipment and will end up in a landfill once removed at the wastewater

facility. Cat waste, however, may contain the harmful parasite, *Toxoplasma gondii*, which is not tested for at the facility, so to be on the safe side, do NOT flush cat poop. Cat litter should also never be flushed, even if it’s marketed as “flushable” or “biodegradable,” as it can lead to pipe blockages at the wastewater facility.



photo credit: Leigh Cushing

ZERO WASTE LIVING



Entertain in Eco-Style

Planning a party? Show off your eco-skills with our top 12 tips. Your guests will be buzzing about the good food, good times and your creative, earth-friendly flair!

Invitations

- 1 Go the electronic route.** For informal events, save paper and use e-cards. The Web has tons of resources for creating fun, animated and personalized invitations.
- 2 Choose recycled (and recyclable) paper.** For formal events, look for the term "post-consumer recycled paper." To go full circle, make sure your invitation can be recycled. Skip non-paper elements like bows and foil etching, and avoid dark-colored papers and envelopes with dye that goes all the way through the paper. (If you tear a piece and it's white in the middle, it's recyclable.)
- 3 Use seeded paper.** Invites embedded with flower seeds are all the rage right now. Be sure to let your guests know they're plantable (not recyclable), so the would-be flower sprouts can grow up to their full potential.

Decorations

- 4 Use nature as your backdrop.** Host your party in a park, where the natural beauty can provide the atmosphere and decoration. For sustainable centerpieces, try potted plants, pine cones, dried flowers and seasonal items like different colored pumpkins and squash.
- 5 Use what you have.** Find objects around the house or reuse decorations from past parties. Use an old sheet rather than buying a plastic tablecloth.
- 6 Skip the balloons.** Latex and Mylar® balloons can't be recycled. Instead, try brightly colored Chinese lanterns that can be reused or given away as party favors. Search online for "how to make Chinese lanterns" to learn how to make your own. If your guests show up with Mylar® balloons, save and refill them for future parties.

Food and Drinks

- 7 Use reusable tableware.** Avoiding disposables is an easy way to dramatically cut down on waste. For bigger parties, check with local party planning businesses for reusables you can rent. If reusables just won't work, try compostables and be sure to compost them after your event. Landfilling compostables creates potent greenhouse gases and is NOT Zero Waste! Check out our 100% compostable Zero Waste Event Kit for up to 200 guests at www.ecocycle.org. Live outside of Boulder County? See www.bpiworld.org for trustworthy brands of compostable products, and visit www.findacomposter.com to find a commercial composter near you.
- 8 Provide drinks in bulk and skip the single-serve bottled drinks.** Use pitchers and cups instead, or buy your drinks in bulk and recycle the bottles when you're finished.
- 9 Share leftovers.** Instead of dumping any extra food, send your guests home with leftovers in reusable containers, and compost all your food scraps.

Party Fun

- 10 Go for a nature scavenger hunt.** Create a list of things to find for a fun, interactive activity.
- 11 Ditch the balloon release.** The pieces fall back to earth as trash and can harm animals that mistake them for food. Instead, try a fun, eco-friendly alternative like releasing petals down a stream or releasing ladybugs or butterflies. Check out www.thebutterflysite.com or www.cylinebiotic.com for more info.
- 12 Plant something.** Provide materials for guests to plant flowers or vegetables. Guests can take their plants home as party favors.



Thank you to the following donors who contributed to Eco-Cycle® from March 26, 2010 – August 31, 2010

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Zero Waste Events Program



Zero Waste Champions

The following individuals have chosen to make an automatic, monthly contribution to Eco-Cycle. Their continual commitment and generosity help sustain our mission to build Zero Waste communities.

Anonymous
Mark Bradley

Christina & Jeremy
Haley
Sara Michl

Patricia Scholes
Linda Silverthorn

Founders' Society

In 1976, Eco-Cycle rolled out a fleet of old school buses onto Boulder streets to collect recyclables. The vision of our founders made us part of the dawning of recycling in America. Today, Eco-Cycle is a leader in the new revolution in resource conservation: Zero Waste. The following individuals are part of the Eco-Cycle Founders' Society, a group of loyal supporters who have committed to annual gifts of \$1,000 or more.

Cindy Carlisle
Richard Matsch
Sara Michl

Allison "Pete" & Pat Palmer
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