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University recycling awarded for creativity

Recycling program nears goal of zero waste by collecting reusable plates and silverware

Jenni Schultz
News Editor

Since 1990, the University of Oregon Campus Recycling Program has been using innovative and creative ways to reduce the amount of waste produced by the campus community. This summer, UOCR was nationally recognized for some of its recent efforts.

The National Recycling Coalition, based in Washington, D.C., gave UOCR the Outstanding Recycling Innovation-Product or Process award for its events recycling program.

For the past five years, UOCR has been making attempts to reach a zero-waste goal for campus events.

The 2002 Willamette Valley Folk Festival was the closest they came to meeting that goal. At 67 percent recovery of reusables, UOCR Manager Karyn Kaplan said she is very pleased with the program's success so far.

"It's been rolling along at light speed," Kaplan said.

At the Folk Festival, 22 percent of normal waste was eliminated from use of reusables, there was a 67 percent recovery of recyclables and compostables, and there was a 70

percent reduction of overall waste generation since 2000.

At the Spring Street Faire, there was an 82 percent waste recovery of recyclables and compostables, compared to 37 percent in 2001.

The program utilizes an idea thought of by former student Jonathan Borgida. The plan uses a process of collecting reusable plates in designated areas. Each vendor at the event passes out reusable plates and silverware to be returned to receptacles after use.

To fund the plan, UOCR obtained an \$8,000 grant from ASUO which it used to buy reusable materials.

In addition to the events recycling project, the program is looking toward other waste management techniques.

"The University is already planning a pilot project to compost all campus paper towels and compostables from the increasing waste generated in the student union and other campus food service areas such as cafeterias and catering," according to the UOCR application submitted to the NRC.

Reusables don't just sit around waiting for the next event, however. To maximize the program's success, the plates and forks are used year-round on campus in various areas.

The UOCR is also working on a contract with some EMU vendors to

use the reusables on a daily basis to reduce that waste.

The UOCR has even inspired noncampus events.

The Lane County Fair, Art in the Vineyard, the Eugene Celebration and Cuthbert Amphitheatre shows are working on utilizing the reduced waste event program.

"The Oregon Country Fair has been observing us and are very interested in the success of the reusable plate project," Kaplan said.

One student who understands the importance of recycling was also honored by the NCS.

Environmental studies senior Taylor Stevenson received a scholarship from the NCS to go to annual conference in Austin, Texas.

She said she submitted an essay about product stewardship and as a result, received the scholarship. NCS paid for her to fly to Austin for the conference and included accommodations in the package.

Although Stevenson is not involved with UOCR, she did help organize the TV and computer collection drive with BRING Recycling, and is impressed with UOCR.

"The University recycling program is amazing," she said.

Contact the news editor at jennischultz@dailyemerald.com.

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