



Spring 2016



SGA helps launch Fox Valley Sustainability Network

What began as an idea put forth at the Green Town Aurora conference in February 2015 is now the Fox Valley Sustainability Network (FVSN). It became official on March 16 when 75 people met at the Hickory Knolls Discovery Center in St. Charles to share success stories and snapshots of what municipalities, businesses and nonprofits are already doing to adopt and implement sustainability practices.



Seven Generations Ahead is leading the effort in collaboration with founding partners **Kane County, City of Aurora** and **a5 Branding and Digital**, which will provide opportunities for stakeholders to reach across boundaries and collaborate on sustainability planning and implementation, seek funding and report progress intended to create a healthier,

more sustainable Fox Valley.

The charge for FVSN members is to think big. "We're hoping that the network not only inspires and educates leaders, but also becomes a catalyst for big idea projects across community boundaries," said SGA Executive Director **Gary Cuneen** during an overview of the new network. He then referred to the climate agreement reached in Paris a few months ago, saying he hopes the network will be a vehicle for Fox Valley communities to meet and exceed the goals set by the U.S. as part of the COP 21 agreement.

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Ascension School launches its zero waste program

SGA has helped another Oak Park school reduce the waste sent to landfills. **Ascension Catholic School** in Oak Park launched its Zero Waste program in the lunchroom in early April.



The process started in mid-January with a waste audit showing 83 percent, by weight, was going to the landfill. By the next audit on April 6, the school had reduced its landfill waste to 15 percent. The school's composting made up 51 percent.

It took a team effort to pull off this feat: Ascension's HOME (Honoring Our Mother Earth) team and school staff.

The school is using a 4-bin sorting process: liquids, recycling, compost for all food and food-soiled paper, and landfill.

In the United States, we throw away about 40 percent of food we buy. That amounts to more than 36 million tons of food waste per year. Developing programs to keep food scraps from the landfill and turn them into compost will have a big environmental impact. Ascension Catholic School is helping lead the way in keeping valuable resources out of our landfills.

Ascension's Zero Waste program is part of **PlantItGreen's** waste reduction effort. **Susan Casey**, Zero Waste Program Coordinator for SGA provided technical assistance and guidance. Reach her at susan@sevengenerationsahead.org.



Farm to School Summit

The [2016 Illinois Farm to School Summit](#) will take place **June 7** at Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield. The free one-day conference will feature experts to teach farmers how to sell their many products to schools - bringing healthy local food to kids who need it most. Morning and afternoon workshop sessions will offer new curricula for classroom and garden, tips from University of Illinois Extension local food experts and information about a new fall program: Illinois Harvest of the Month.

Guest speakers include **Chef Greg Christian, Diane Chapeta** of SGA, and **Lindsay Blough** of the Illinois State Board of Education.

9th Annual OPMicrobrew

Produced by Seven Generations Ahead (SGA), the **Oak Park Micro Brew Review** showcases the best craft beers that Illinois brewers have to offer, select beers from Midwest and national craft breweries, live music and small plates incorporating local food from Oak Park area restaurants. This year's festival is **Aug. 20, 3-7 p.m.** in downtown Oak Park. This event is one of the Midwest's top craft beer festivals of the summer and the largest zero-waste craft beer fest in the Midwest. **Early Bird tickets** are on sale now.

All proceeds support SGA's work to promote healthy and sustainable communities.

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