



Apple Crunch success in Illinois

The Illinois Farm to School Network, a project led by Seven Generations Ahead, coordinated another year of the Illinois Great Apple Crunch. On Oct. 11, participants across the state all "crunched" together at noon for the 2018 Great Lakes Great Apple Crunch. The event was part of the multi-state National Farm to School Month. The diverse mix of sites that participated included schools, garden and after school programs, juvenile justice centers, residential programs, and other organizations.

Illinois topped the region in celebrating local apples, with **583,925 total participants** across our state.

[Read more](#)

The Illinois Farm to School Network works to increase farm to school programming and participation across our state. Its program participation numbers are growing every year, as more and more child feeding institutions and garden programs choose farm to school. Here's how IFSN did in 2018.



GreenTown Will County kicks off Regional Sustainability Network

On Oct. 26, over 300 individuals from various public and private sectors came together for GreenTown Will County at Joliet Junior College Renaissance Center. The day also marked the launch of the Will County Regional Sustainability Network (WCRSN), designed to connect people, communities and resources to make lasting improvements to the region's economy, ecology and social equity. GreenTown, full-day conferences co-produced by Seven Generations Ahead and a5 Inc., has now engaged more than 6,300 people in four states over 21 events.

[Read more](#)



D97 fifth grader Keagan Patrick Bonstell Carey makes a presentation during PlantGreen's 7th annual Institutional Leaders Forum on Dec. 5.

PlantGreen in 2018: Tackling plastic pollution, growing school gardens, making strides toward solar

PlantGreen held its seventh annual Institutional Leaders Forum Dec. 5 at the 19th Century Club. The Forum reports on progress toward achieving goals spelled out in the Environmental Sustainability Plan for Oak Park and River Forest. Among those presenting were **Julie Moller**, River Forest Sustainability Commission member who talked about the pervasiveness of plastic pollution. D97 fifth grader **Keagan Patrick Bonstell Carey** reported on the district's flourishing school gardens. Solar consultant **Mark Burger** gave an update on efforts to bring 100 percent renewable energy to Oak Park and River Forest. A dozen other organizations presented "snapshots" of their sustainability successes in 2018.



Plastic pieces scooped up on a beach by Julie Moller.

Among the success snapshots:

- **River Forest School District 90 Sustainability Plan:** District establishing sustainability clubs at all schools, will be doing a formal review of science curriculum in 2019-2020 school year.
- **West Cook Wild Ones:** Sold \$17,000 in native plants at annual sale with 50 percent new purchasers.
- **Triton College's (GENIUS) Program:** Full-ride scholarships for academically gifted students from low-income backgrounds to pursue careers in geology, environmental science, engineering and related fields.
- **Oak Park Green Block Parties:** Offered block parties on three topics:

including Mobilizing for Monarchs, Pesticides free lawn care and sustainable eating.

- **River Forest Block Parties:** Almost half of all parties chose to plant a pollinator garden on their parkway as a block party activity.
- **PlantGreen Zero Waste Schools:** Schools Green Team collaborative represents 20 public and private elementary, middle and high schools working to get them closer to zero waste.
- **Park District of Oak Park:** Added rain gardens at six locations in two parks, installation of cisterns and other rainwater diversion methods are saving well over a million gallons of water annually.

[Read the story in Oak Leaves](#)

An eventful November in the Fox Valley

Zero Waste Schools

On Nov. 28, educators, school administrators, district staff, parents, and county recycling agency representatives gathered at the Onion Pub & Brewery in Lake Barrington for a meeting that sparked conversations and connections around zero waste initiatives in Fox Valley area schools and beyond. The event began with a presentation by Susan Casey, Zero Waste Schools Program Manager with Seven Generations Ahead.



[Read more](#)

Fox Valley Sustainability Network

On Nov. 30, the Fox Valley Sustainability Network hosted its final forum of 2018 at the Hickory Knolls Discovery Center in St. Charles. The forum focused on the Greenest Region Compact: what the framework is, how it works, and how it can be utilized by municipalities in sustainability planning. Edith Makra of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus gave the main presentation. Additionally, FVSN core team members Maggie Soliz of Applied Ecological Services and Abbey Beck of the Batavia Environmental Commission shared network updates and how they used the GRC to build green goals.





Ashley Marinko and Meryl Davis are fall 2018 interns at SGA.

Fashioning a career in sustainability

An interest in fashion led **Ashley Marinko**, who had long been passionate about the environment, to become involved in sustainability work. While a student at Texan Christian University, Ashley did a couple of internships with big-name fashion houses in New York City and Los Angeles.

One of her internships was in the sustainability department of GUESS clothing company's corporate office in LA. But after spending time "in corporate, I wanted to have a nonprofit experience," Ashley says.

Though she loved fashion, she left the internships feeling she wasn't connecting. "I needed something more meaningful in a career."

Ashley started her internship at SGA in September. She's working on the PlanItGreen sustainability report. She also worked on a webinar that looked at how three Chicago-area institutions—a jail, museum, and a university—have reduced wasted food and developed viable composting and food recovery programs.

Envisioning a world with less food waste

Meryl Davis became interested in food insecurity and food justice during her senior year at Evanston Township High School. She had a big vision for her research project: to set up a network for grocery stores and restaurants to donate food to local food pantries, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters.

After researching similar operations around the country, she quickly realized, one, that her plans "were too large for a one semester project," and two, "I didn't know enough to start a huge project like that, so I turned it into a research project, which was just as good because I learned a lot," she says.

In October, Meryl, now a senior at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill., began an internship at SGA. She's been tasked with helping put together a zero waste school toolkit guide for all K-12 Illinois schools that want to reduce their food waste. She is writing a section on food recovery and doing research on food share tables.

[**Read more**](#)

Webinar covered best practices, resources for reducing wasted food and composting

SGA produced a webinar focusing on Illinois institutions reducing wasted food. Speakers for the Dec. 10 webinar included Joe Iosbaker from University of Illinois at Chicago Medical Center, Sgt. Daniel Sheline from Lake County Adult Corrections, and Carter O'Brien from the Field Museum. If you missed this webinar or want to access this valuable resource, you can now view the recording [here](#) or download the slides as a PDF [here](#).



UPCOMING EVENTS



Fox Valley Sustainability Network forum: Community Solar & the Future Energy Jobs Act

Late January (exact date and location TBD)

Don't miss the first FVSN forum of 2019!

Join the Fox Valley Sustainability Network for a late-January forum focusing on community solar and the Future Energy Jobs Act.

Stay tuned for an official invite coming soon.



WEBINAR: Hospital Food Recovery and Composting Jan. 15, 10-11:30 a.m.

Join SGA for our second institution-based sustainability webinar focusing specifically on hospitals reducing wasted food and composting. Jen Nelson, SGA's Senior Program Manager, will moderate. Speakers will include:

Jennifer M Grenier DNP, RN-BC, Director of Nursing Medical/Surgical Unit and Acute In-Patient Rehab Hospital at Rush University Medical Center

Joe Iosbaker, Recycling Coordinator, Office of Sustainability, University of Illinois at Chicago

Cynthia Vasquez, Director of Volunteer Services and PlantGreen Core Team representative for Rush Oak Park Hospital

Fox Valley Sustainability Network

Register [HERE](#).

Keep up-to-date with SGA and other sustainability events in the region on our [calendar](#).

SUPPORT SGA'S WORK



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