



# NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER



The Zero Waste Schools newsletter will help you get your school on a path toward generating zero waste through waste prevention, recycling, composting, and food recovery. You'll also find resources that connect zero waste to healthy eating, school gardens, and environmental education and action.

Feel free to share the newsletter with friends, colleagues, and students who are interested in zero waste.

[Sign up for ZWS news](#)

## Microplastic Madness film screening & discussion



Calling all school green leaders! Don't miss this opportunity to preview the award-winning film **'Microplastic Madness.'** Join SGA and our partners at the Fox Valley Sustainability Network for a screening of the 76-minute documentary 'Microplastic Madness' followed by a panel discussion around plastic initiatives and policies that exist, as well as ones that are in the works locally, regionally, and nationally.

**Wednesday, Nov. 18, 4-6 p.m.**

Speakers include:

- **Abby Beck**, Ward 5 City Council Member, City of Batavia
- **Cynthia Kanner**, Executive Director, Environmental Defenders of McHenry County
- **Jaclyn Wegner**, Director of Conservation Action, Shedd Aquarium

Read about the film and watch the trailer [HERE](#).

Click [HERE](#) to register.

Teachers: Consider using this Nov. 18 screening to preview the film, then [host your own screening](#) for your classroom or school (free to Title 1 schools). Check out all the great [teacher resources](#) available to use with your students.

## Solorio students host Pumpkin Smash



Leading the way to increased composting awareness in Chicago, the Zero Waste Team from Solorio High School coordinated a Pumpkin Smash for their Gage Park community on Nov. 7. Typically held the Saturday after Halloween, these events provide communities the opportunity to drop off their pumpkins for composting instead of landfilling them.

Composting is not a new concept for Solorio students. Since 2016, Solorio has composted all cafeteria food scraps and lunch trays through the [Chicago Public Schools Commercial Composting Program](#), which Seven Generations Ahead helps implement. With support from [SCARCE](#), Pumpkin Smash locations have grown in number throughout our region over recent years. Solorio's Pumpkin Smash, one of only four events in Chicago in 2020, paves the way for more events next year across the city.

Solorio Zero Waste Team leaders **Gabriela Mata** (11th grade) and **David Duran** (11th grade) have contributed the following story about their event:

### **Solorio's Pumpkin Smash**

*Our Zero Waste program at Solorio High School is full of students that want to bring good to our planet and our communities. We do this by making neighborhood clean-ups and events like Pumpkin Smash that will let our community members participate in creating a change one step at a time. Making events like these sends the message that the environment is important and that we are taking key steps to better the planet. We decided to do the Pumpkin Smash event because usually during Halloween, pumpkins are carved to celebrate the holiday. Once the day is over, people usually throw them away without knowing that pumpkins let out many greenhouse gases that are contributing to global warming. By hosting this, we are creating a space in which our community members can leave the pumpkins at Solorio to make them into compost. This compost can then be used for our garden to provide nutrients for more plants to be grown!*

Read the full story and see more fun photos [HERE](#).

Give thanks, and make zero waste

Instead of filling up a landfill this Thanksgiving, show your gratitude through a zero waste feast.

### Plan to reduce food waste

Check out these tips from the [FDA](#) and [Love Food Hate Waste](#).

### Setting the table

Use real dishes and eliminate single-use items like paper/plastic plates, utensils, cups, and napkins.



### Decorations

Natural items like gourds, seed pods, and colorful fall leaves make beautiful decorations. Or, get crafty, and use household items or thrift store finds to create your own decorations. Enlist the kiddos to make your home and table festive.

### Reusable containers

Thanksgiving is known for the plentiful amount of leftovers--for many people this is the best part! Instead of disposables, use reusable containers for all your leftovers.

### Composting

Return nutrients to the soil by composting your Thanksgiving food scraps. Learn how to backyard compost or vermicompost from the [Institute for Local Self-Reliance](#). Many [communities](#) across Illinois offer curbside composting service. If this is not available in your community, a subscription-based compost bucket exchange service might be an option for you. Learn more at the [Illinois Food Scrap Coalition](#).

**Reduce, Reuse, Recycle/Compost, and see how close to zero waste you can get this Thanksgiving!**

## SGA's at-home food waste activity

Since we are all cooking and eating at home more, now is a great time to get a handle on the food waste you may be generating. Check out SGA's [Food Waste Activity](#) to:

- Learn about the problem of food waste
- Conduct an at-home food waste audit
- Take action by preventing food waste, composting, and learning about the connection between composting, soil health, and climate change.



## Apply to be a 2021 Green Ribbon School



The [Illinois Green Ribbon Schools Application](#) is now open! Illinois Green Ribbon Schools recognizes PreK-12 schools that have active programs and actions to promote and educate students on sustainability. This year the evaluation process will take into account the changes and challenges this school year has presented. Applications can highlight pre-COVID sustainability efforts, as well as

any current work being done to move these efforts forward.

Top scoring schools from Illinois will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools program for consideration at the national level.

- View this [webinar](#) from the Illinois Green Alliance learn more about the application/nomination process, including a basic timeline and best practices for Illinois schools to apply.
- Contact Illinois Green Alliance for assistance at [info@illinoisgreenalliance.org](mailto:info@illinoisgreenalliance.org) or (312) 245-8300.

**Application deadline: Feb. 8 at 5 p.m.**

## Classroom chemical disposal



**Illinois Environmental Protection Agency**

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) is offering to assist K-12 private and public schools in Illinois with proper disposal of a waste product that could pose a hazard during normal storage, transportation, or disposal generated from an instructional curriculum,

including laboratory wastes, expired chemical, unstable compounds, and toxic or flammable materials. Hazardous educational waste **does not include** wastes generated as a result of building, grounds, or vehicle maintenance, asbestos abatement lead paint abatement, or other non-curriculum activities.

This program is part of the Agency's *Household Hazardous Solid Waste Fund* and is free to schools in Illinois. However, program funds are limited, so don't delay getting your application submitted. For an application or more information, contact Becky Jayne at [Becky.Jayne@illinois.gov](mailto:Becky.Jayne@illinois.gov). Upon approval, the IEPA will schedule a pick-up with the State's Hazardous Waste Materials contractor at the school.

## Local student trained in climate science

Lizzie Short, a junior at Oak Park River Forest High School, became a Climate Reality Project Leader this past July, joining a large network of activists in over 150 countries committed to spreading awareness of the climate crisis. Read about her experience as a project leader in the opinion piece she wrote for her school newspaper: "[Continuing the fight for our climate.](#)"

Lizzie is also a member of SGA's high school climate action program, It's Our Future (IOF). She and fellow IOF member and Climate Reality leader, Jelena, are offering Climate Reality presentations for all audiences.

For more information about It's Our Future and booking a Climate Reality presentation, click [HERE](#).



## Young Filmmakers Contest



### [Young Filmmakers Contest 2021](#)

Youth in grades 3 through age 25 are invited to submit a short film that presents solutions to an environmental/ sustainability related issue.

Submissions are due **Jan. 5, 2021**. The winning films will premiere at the [One Earth Film Festival](#) in March 2021, and winners will receive cash prizes or scholarships. Take a look at winning films from 2020 [HERE](#).

[Young Filmmakers Online Academy](#)

For students in grades 3-8, this course takes the most up-to-date filmmaking pedagogy and distills it into a series that covers pre-production, production, and post-production. Only cell phones or tablets with editing software are required. This series is for individuals and classrooms to use on their own or synchronously.

## Beyond Plastic Pollution online course

This spring take a "deep dive" into the many issues associated with plastic pollution by taking Bennington College's online course, **Beyond Plastic Pollution**.

This environmental policy class, taught by Judith Enck, founder and president of Beyond Plastics, is open to anyone (including high school students) who wants to learn more about plastic pollution and what they can do to address it in their own communities. If you do not need to receive academic credit, the fee to audit the class is \$100; if you do wish to receive official credit, the cost is \$400.



Classes will be held on Wednesdays from 7-9 p.m. EST from Feb. 17 to Mar. 30. Read the course description [HERE](#).

[Registration](#) opens Dec. 1. Email [capa@bennington.edu](mailto:capa@bennington.edu) for more information.

## Grant opportunities

**COVID-19 Emergency School Meal Delivery Fund:** GENYOUth is providing grants of up to **\$3,000 per school** to supply much-needed resources for meal distribution and delivery efforts to get food to students during COVID-19. From soft-sided coolers, bags and containers for individual servings, to protective gear for food service sanitation and safety, this equipment will help ensure our children continue to receive the nutritious meals they need. Applications will be reviewed and approved on a rolling basis.

**Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grants:** Involve your students in hands-on natural resources stewardship. Projects for this IL Department of Natural Resources grant must emphasize student involvement and wildlife habitat. Maximum award is **\$1,000 per applicant**. Teachers, nature center personnel, and youth group leaders for grades pre-kindergarten-12 may apply. **Deadline: Nov. 20.**

## Events



### Tools to Fight Food Waste in Schools: Adjusting to the New Normal

**Nov. 12 at 3 p.m. CST**

Join the World Wildlife Fund to learn about tools and strategies to reduce food waste for your school, classroom, or kitchen at home. Their Food Waste Warrior curriculum helps teachers and students connect our food system with nature and provides hands-on learning opportunities. This webinar is for educators, school administrators, nutritionists, high school students, and anyone else interested in reducing food waste.



### Connecting Students to Green Building Careers Webinar

**Nov. 18, 3:30 p.m.**

Join the Illinois Green Alliance for the final event in their Green Schools Fall Webinar series. View recordings of past webinars with this link, as well.



### Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Virtual Tour

**Nov. 18, 2-3:15 p.m.**

Go behind the scenes and under water to see how the MWRD transforms the water you use every day. Travel back in time to early Chicago to learn about

the Chicago River and wastewater treatment technology.



**Indoor Air Quality in K-12 Schools: Addressing the Concept of Layered Risk Amidst COVID-19**

**Nov. 19, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. CST**

Join expert panelists to learn about how proper IAQ management can help reduce health risks, including virus transmission, and explore the scientific basis for IAQ guidance issued by government and public health organizations.

Hosted by the U.S. EPA.

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This newsletter was created by Seven Generations Ahead.

Funding for Zero Waste Schools is provided by Peoples Gas, North Shore Gas, and Food:Land:Opportunity, a collaboration between Kinship Foundation and The Chicago Community Trust and funded through the Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust.



**Food:Land:Opportunity**  
Localizing the Chicago Foodshed

