



FEBRUARY 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](#)

School cafeterias reimaged: The case for reusable foodware

Tuesday, Feb. 16, 3-4:15 p.m. CST



Want to create a better dining experience, protect student health, and cut costs, all while reducing waste and its impact on our environment?

Join Seven Generations Ahead for this webinar to learn how your K-12 school district can reap the benefits of transitioning to reusable foodware. School nutrition professionals from two urban districts will share how they've prioritized reusables and what motivated this change. You'll hear about the impacts on

staffing, waste levels, and costs as they make the transition to using dishwashers, bulk milk dispensers, and durable trays, dishes, and utensils.

You'll also learn about the health and environmental impacts associated with toxins commonly found in single-use foodware, as well as the safety of reusables during COVID-19 and ways to minimize disposable packaging for classroom meals and curbside meal distribution.

Speakers:

- **Sue Chiang**, Pollution Prevention Director, Center for Environmental Health
- **Diane Grodek**, Executive Chef, Austin Independent School District
- **Eliza Pessereau**, Minnesota GreenCorps Waste Reduction Member, Minneapolis Public Schools, Culinary & Wellness Services

A Q&A session will follow the presentation.

This webinar is for school nutrition staff, as well as district administrators, procurement, sustainability, facilities, and operations staff. Teachers, parents, and students are also

welcome.

Click [HERE](#) to register.

Microplastic Madness film screening

Thursday, Feb. 25, 4:30-6:30 p.m. CST

Join the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County and Seven Generations Ahead for a screening of the 76-minute award-winning documentary *Microplastic Madness* followed by a panel discussion with Q&A highlighting what students and schools can do to tackle plastic pollution.

Microplastic Madness is the story of 56 fifth graders from Red Hook, Brooklyn -- living on the frontline of the climate crisis -- whose actions on plastic pollution morph into extraordinary leadership and scalable victories. Created to inspire kids, teachers, and policy makers alike, this is the spark needed to grow a youth-led Plastic Free Future movement in schools everywhere.



The film has been accepted by 30 film festivals, won 6 awards, and has been screened in 63 cities across the U.S. and 37 countries abroad.

The panel will be moderated by **Cynthia Kanner**, Executive Director of the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County.

Speakers:

- **Debby Lee Cohen**, Co-Director & Producer, *Microplastic Madness*; Executive Director, Cafeteria Culture
- **Scott Kuykendall**, Water Resources Specialist, McHenry County Planning & Development
- **Jaclyn Wegner**, Director of Conservation Action, Shedd Aquarium

Click [HERE](#) to watch the trailer, find teacher resources, and learn about the movie impact campaign.

Green Schools Summits

The Center for Green Schools and the Green Schools National Network invite you to come together with professionals in your field to learn new strategies, gain inspiration from our green school community, and inform the next chapter of the movement at one of the following four summits.

Educators Summit: Feb. 12–13

Building Industry Professionals Summit: Feb. 18–19

Facilities and Sustainability Leaders Summit: Feb. 25–26



Learn more about each summit and register [HERE](#).

The cost of attending each of these summits is \$50. Scholarships are available.



Celebrate 10 years of the [One Earth Film Festival](#) from **March 5-14**. This year's festival theme is "10 Years of Inspiring Change."

Choose from more than 25 outstanding short and feature-length films that shine a light on the most important issues of our time. Learn about solutions and actions to address climate, environmental justice, conservation, waste, and more. Watch online from the comfort of your own home, and participate in filmmaker and expert Q&As.

Find the [festival schedule](#) and reserve your tickets. Advance registration is highly recommended.

Science First & College First Programs for Chicago Public School students

The Chicago Botanic Garden's [Science First](#) and [College First](#) program applications are now open.

Science First is a free summer science program for **Chicago Public School students** in grades 6-9 that strives to increase students' knowledge and appreciation of the environment and how scientists study the environment. College First, for current Chicago Public High School sophomores & juniors, offers a paid internship consisting of career mentorship, field ecology and conservation science, and college prep and assistance.



Feeding the Future: Redefining the Student Dining Experience in Austin, Texas



The February issue of The Green Schools National Network's [GreenNotes](#) features Austin Independent School District's innovative efforts to elevate the student dining experience. The food service team at AISD aims to support the achievement of all students by expanding food access, serving healthy, tasty meals, and providing learning opportunities about nutrition, cultural foodways, and the food system.

Diane Grodek, Executive Chef at AISD, will be sharing about some of these efforts at SGA's upcoming webinar, [School cafeterias reimaged: The case for reusable foodware](#).

Grant and scholarship 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. Applications will be reviewed and approved on a rolling basis.

[President's Environmental Youth Award](#): Students can submit a project and make a difference. **Deadline Feb. 19.**

[Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators](#): For K-12 teachers who

employ innovative approaches to environmental education and use the environment as a context for teaching their students. Up to two teachers from each EPA region, from different states, will be selected to receive this award. **Deadline Feb. 19.**

Illinois Conservation Foundation's Conservation Achievement Scholarship: Awarded to 4 high school seniors in Illinois who have demonstrated effective, voluntary and long-term dedication to the preservation, protection, enhancement and/or promotion of Illinois' natural resources. **Deadline Mar. 1.**

Garden For Nature Grant Program: This West Cook Wild Ones grant is for local non-profits and organizations who would like to improve the environment and engage the public through a native plant garden. Applicants must be located in West Cook County. **Deadline Mar. 15.**

Whole Kids Foundation Garden Grant: This grant provides \$3,000 to support a new or existing edible educational garden located at either a K-12 school or at a nonprofit organization that serves children in grades K-12. **Deadline Mar. 31.**

5 Gyres Trash Academy

The innovative **Trash Academy** videos by **5 Gyres Institute** teach about the history of plastic and what we can all do now to foster a cleaner planet and a plastic-free tomorrow. 5 Gyres is a leader in the global movement against plastic pollution whose team conducts research on plastic pollution around the world. Their community outreach and citizen science programs help them create data-driven solutions to the plastic problem.



Events



Going Green Matters Webinar Series

Now through April

Hosted by Go Green Wilmette, these locally-relevant webinars focus on a variety of topics ranging from soil health to gardening to demystifying recycling. Presentations by local experts will be followed by a discussion of how the issues impacts us and how we can take action.



Get Ready to Recycle and Compost at School

Feb. 11, 1 p.m. CST

Join the Northern California Recycling Association to learn best practices for creating the physical and social infrastructure for recycling and composting at school.



Plant Chicago's Roundtable Talk: Composting & Waste Reduction

Feb. 18, 12-1 p.m.

This discussion led by expert panelists will help you reevaluate your consumption habits. You'll learn what steps you can take to reduce waste at home and when making purchases at the store.



Wild Things Conference 2021

Part 1: Feb. 19-21, Part 2: Feb 26-28

The virtual conference features workshops and sessions from regional and national experts plus meet & greets, video content, and exhibitors. Learn about the plants and animals that call our region home, hear about new ecological research and how to get involved in conservation, and meet other people passionate about nature. Registration for each weekend is \$15.

The entire conference is \$30.

Chicago Conservation Corps Trainings

Orientations offered Mar. 1-4

The Chicago Conservation Corps is now recruiting for its Spring 2021 Sustainability Leadership Training Series. This program empowers Chicagoans to complete neighborhood sustainability and environmental projects that impact and engage communities across the city. Learn more by attending an online orientation.



Environmental Educators Association of Illinois Annual Conference

Mar. 11-13

The 2021 EEAI Annual Conference is virtual this year with some opportunities for regional field experiences. This conference will provide you with the tools to educate and inspire the next generation. Sessions cover water-related education, community engagement, programming for a digital world, support for educators during COVID, and non-formal and formal education partnerships.



Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

Loyola Climate Change Conference- Accompanying Youth to a Hope-filled Future

Mar. 15-18

This free virtual conference will focus on how to amplify the voices of young activists. Each evening will have programming around a variety of topics.

Seven Generations Ahead | [Email](#) | [Website](#)



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.

