



# JANUARY 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.

Share the newsletter with friends, colleagues, and students interested in zero waste.

[Sign up for ZWS news](#)

## CPS expands commercial composting program

SGA is excited to announce that we will be working with the following 10 schools selected to participate in Chicago Public School's Commercial Composting & Recycling Program this spring:

- Arthur Ashe Elementary School
- Coonley Elementary School
- Doolittle Elementary School
- Lake View High School
- LaSalle Language Academy
- Lincoln Park High School
- Solomon Elementary School
- Sutherland Elementary School
- Von Steuben Metropolitan Science Center
- Washington High School



These schools will join the 14 schools already in the program, which started in 2014. Students and staff divert an average of 80% or more of lunchroom waste from landfills each day. Learn more from the program flyer [HERE](#).

## Food Waste Warrior Project



**Chicago Public Schools K-12 teachers:** help your students become Food Waste Warriors with this opportunity from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and SGA.

Teachers will use the WWF's Food Waste Warrior curriculum to teach their students about food waste. The lessons are available in K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grade level bands. As part of

the project, teachers will conduct 3-5 food waste audits in their classroom or lunchroom

and submit the data to the WWF's Food Waste Warriors Dashboard. The waste audits will involve students sorting their meal discards into categories and weighing it. Learn more [HERE](#).

CPS teachers who complete the project by May 5, 2022, will receive a \$100 stipend.

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## McHenry County Sustainability Summit

Monday, Jan. 31, 9 am-2 pm, Virtual Event

The [Environmental Defenders of McHenry County](#) are excited to invite key community members to the first McHenry County Sustainability Summit. Join the conversation about county-wide change to reduce waste and increase recycling in local restaurants, schools, and municipalities.



The Summit will feature two keynote speakers and various breakout sessions, including a **Zero Waste Schools presentation by SGA's Susan Casey and Gary Cuneen**.

**School district officials, restaurant owners/managers, and township officials are welcome to participate.** Learn more and register [HERE](#). There is no cost to attend.

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## The latest from Cafeteria Culture

[Cafeteria Culture](#) continues to create and share amazing resources for students to address the climate crisis and plastic pollution.

### Desktop Lunch Survey

Watch this 3-minute video about the [Desktop Lunch Survey - How much plastic is in your school lunch?](#) to see how students can collect before and after data from their own lunches, analyze the data, make suggestions for reducing single-use plastics, and help to accelerate policy change in their school, city, and across the nation (even during COVID!).



### Microplastic Madness Toolkit

The Desktop Lunch Survey is just one of many units available in Cafeteria Culture's Microplastic Madness Toolkit. Request free access to the Toolkit [HERE](#) (scroll down). It is loaded with real-world actions that will empower your students to make change.

### Special free streaming of the film *Microplastic Madness*

Friday, Jan. 14 through Monday, Jan. 17 (until 11 pm CST) for MLK Service/Action Day. Access the film during the above dates at [bit.ly/MicroplasticMovie](https://bit.ly/MicroplasticMovie) or at [CafCu Media](#).

*Microplastic Madness* (76 minutes) tells the uplifting story of 56 fifth graders from P.S. 15 in Brooklyn - living on the frontline of the climate crisis - whose actions on plastic pollution morph into extraordinary leadership and scalable victories. With stop-motion animation, heartfelt kid commentary, and interviews of experts and renowned scientists who are engaged in the most cutting edge research on the harmful effects of microplastics, this alarming, yet charming narrative, conveys an urgent message in user-friendly terms.

Watch the trailer [HERE](#).

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## The Plastic Bag Store is coming to Chicago!

Jan. 20-30

**The Wrigley Building, 410 N. Michigan Ave.  
In a ground-level storefront on Chicago's Magnificent Mile**



*The Plastic Bag Store* is the feature attraction of the 2022 Chicago International Puppet Theater Festival.

"New York artist Robin Frohardt's tragi-comic ode to the foreverness of plastic appears to be a storefront grocery, but it's actually stocked with hundreds of hand-made items—fruits, vegetables, sushi, deli meats, and more — all crafted from organic NYC trash.

Several times a day, the *Store* transforms from an installation into a micro-cinema for a series of dynamic puppet films that transport the audience from the distant past into a dystopian future. With her distinct sense of humor, Frohardt challenges us to think about how future generations will misinterpret us by the waste we leave behind."

Learn more about *The Plastic Bag Store* [HERE](#), including a video tour by the artist.

Store visits are free and appropriate for all ages .

Tickets to timed film screenings: \$30 Regular, \$20 Students  
Film running time: 60 minutes. The film is appropriate for ages 8 and up.

## Holiday tree and lights recycling

### Holiday Tree Recycling:

- [Chicago's 2022 Tree Recycling Program](#) runs from **Jan. 8-22** at 26 parks across the city. Six locations will also provide free mulch on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Outside of Chicago? Check with your local public works department to see if they have a curbside pick-up option for recycling trees.
- Several [compost subscription services](#) will collect your tree for a fee.



### Holiday Lights Recycling:

- Check out these [Chicago locations](#) where you can drop off string lights and extension cords until Jan. 31.
- The City of West Chicago is offering drop-off bins for broken lights at [six locations](#) until Jan. 21.
- [Earth911's Recycling Search](#): Enter "string lights" and your zip code to find drop-off locations (this is also a great resource for many other hard-to-recycle items).
- Mail-in recycling is also a great option. Try sending in your broken lights to [Holiday LEDs](#) or [Christmas Lights Source](#).

## Illinois Green Ribbon Schools applications due soon!

The [Illinois Green Ribbon Schools application](#) deadline is almost here-- but you've still got time.

The program recognizes schools that have active

programs, actions, and dedication to promote and educate about sustainability. Working in partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Green Alliance accepts applications from schools across Illinois. Showcase your school's achievements and let your community know what steps you've taken to green your school!

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.

Contact Liz Wimmer with questions: [lwimmer@illinoisgreenalliance.org](mailto:lwimmer@illinoisgreenalliance.org).

**Application deadline: Jan. 24.**

### Tips for the 2022 Application

1. Gain best practices from a past honoree by watching this [short video clip](#) from Joseph Sears School (2020 Honoree) to learn tips for preparing and completing your application.
2. Visit the [Green Strides](#) website for standards, programs, and grants to help you complete the application and for tools to green your school.
3. Read about past winning Illinois Green Ribbon Schools from [2021](#), [2020](#), [2019](#), [2018](#), and [2017](#) for additional insights on the application process.
4. Include 5 photos of your school in action as a part of your application to highlight the green things your school has done.

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## Beyond Plastic Pollution online course



Take a deep dive into the problem of plastic pollution by enrolling in Bennington College's *Beyond Plastic Pollution* online course this spring.

Taught by Judith Enck - founder and president of [Beyond Plastics](#) - this environmental policy class is **open to people of all ages, including high school and college students**. This class is

for those who want to tackle the issue of plastic in their own community, state, and nation.

**Wednesdays, 7-9 pm EST, April 13 - May 25**

**Cost: \$100 to audit or \$400 to receive college credit**

Learn more and register [HERE](#). Email [capa@bennington.edu](mailto:capa@bennington.edu) for more information.

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## Make the Most of Food @ Home Challenge Launch Party

Teachers, join the [Make the Most of Food @ Home Challenge](#) virtual launch party on **Tuesday, Jan. 18, at 6 pm CST**.

Meet past teacher participants and get inspired to learn how to lead students in a 4-week class-wide or school-wide challenge in which households measure a week's worth of discarded food and take actions to improve nutrition, save money, and reduce food waste.



Register for the free virtual launch party [HERE](#).

Register [HERE](#) for the full course by Feb. 7. Cost: \$150. (Limited sponsorships available for launch party-goers.)

Contact [info@recycleleaders.com](mailto:info@recycleleaders.com) for more information.

*This challenge is organized by [Recycle Leaders](#) in partnership with the [Audubon Naturalist Society](#) and informed by the [EPA's Food too Good too Waste Toolkit](#).*

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## Grants and other opportunities

**[School Nutrition Foundation Equipment Grants](#)** Eligible applicants have the opportunity to win equipment grants, each worth between \$20,000 to \$100,000. Applications must be submitted by a school nutrition director. **Deadline: Jan. 31.**

**[USDA 1890 National Scholars Program](#)** For high school students who want to study agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, and related disciplines at an 1890 Land-Grant University (see list of qualifying universities at the link above). Full tuition and room/board included. **Deadline: Jan. 31.**

**[President's Environmental Youth Award](#)** Your student's project could be an award winner! Encourage your students with an existing environmental stewardship project or an idea for a project to apply. Applicants from all 50 states as well as U.S. territories are eligible. **Deadline: Feb. 18.**

**[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 of the EPA's 10 regions will be selected to receive this award. **Deadline: Feb. 18.**

**[Whole Kids Foundation Salad Bar Grant](#)** Any district or independent school participating in the National School Lunch Program can apply. The grant program donates salad bars to U.S. schools to give kids daily access to fresh fruits and vegetables. **Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.**

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## Events

**[Chicago Wilderness Cafe: Collaboration for the 30x30 or America the Beautiful Campaign](#)**

**Jan. 26, 3-4:30 pm, virtual**

Join Chicago Wilderness and the Illinois Environmental Council to discuss the international campaign to protect 30% land and water by 2030 and how Illinois can align with this ambitious goal.

**[CFPAC's 17th Annual Chicago Food Justice Summit](#)**

**Feb. 23-25, virtual**

Join the Chicago Food Policy Action Council in celebrating 17 years of leveraging collective power to create policy change. The theme of this year's summit will be Collective Care, highlighting how, in the face of a global pandemic, neighbors, mutual aid networks, cooks, and local growers showed up for us and for each other. **Registration will open Jan. 2022, event schedule TBD.**

**[Small Farms Winter Webinar Series: Introduction to Vermicomposting](#)**

**Mar. 3, 12-1 pm, virtual**

Join the University of Illinois Extension and Crystal Stevens with [Flourish Farmstead](#) to learn the basics of vermicomposting. Crystal will discuss soil health, how to build indoor and outdoor vermicompost bins, how to care for red wiggler worms, and how to maintain bins.

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



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