



MARCH 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](#)

ZWS participates in the new Cross Community Climate Collaborative



The Zero Waste Schools (ZWS) team is embarking on a new, exciting collaboration! At the beginning of this month Seven Generations Ahead (SGA) helped launch the [Cross Community Climate Collaborative \(C4\)](#) Composting Initiative in the Cook County communities of Bellwood, Broadview, and Maywood. As part of this initiative, ZWS will partner with schools and districts to implement waste reduction strategies in schools across these three communities.

C4, a collaboration between SGA, the Urban Efficiency Group, and the mayors of Broadview, Oak Park, and River Forest, is designed to bring together BIPOC and non-minority communities across income lines to share ideas, secure resources, and drive large-scale projects that achieve agreed upon greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction, equity, and sustainability goals. The Composting Initiative is the result of a culmination of efforts from SGA, local mayors, school superintendents, key school staff, and various community leaders and is being funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

SGA Executive Director Gary Cuneen recently joined Oak Park President Vicki Scaman, River Forest President Kathy Adduci, and Broadview Mayor Katrina Thompson at the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM). C4 placed first among small cities for the 2023 Childhood Obesity Prevention & Environmental Health and Sustainability Awards, presented by the USCM and the American Beverage Foundation for a Healthy America. The award includes a generous grant to support the work of C4.

Read the entire article [HERE](#).

Food Waste Prevention Week 2023

April 10-16

Food Waste Prevention Week is a national campaign focused on raising awareness and inspiring action to reduce food waste. In 2022, over 180 partners throughout the food system amplified messaging focused on food waste reduction's ability to save us money, reduce hunger, and protect the environment.



Here are a few ways you can get involved this year:

- Encourage your students to submit an entry to the **K-12 Student Art Contest**. This year's theme is "How Does Reducing Our Food Waste Protect Our Planet?" Prizes will be awarded to both winning students and sponsoring teachers. **Entries accepted through April 22.**
- Register for this **teacher workshop** focused on strategies for reducing food waste in K-12 schools. A stipend of \$300 is available to up to 100 teachers who participate in Food Waste Prevention Week and complete this workshop. **Registration deadline is March 10.**
- Check out these awesome **in-class teaching resources** for more creative, impactful ways to get your students involved in Food Waste Prevention Week.

At its foundation, Food Waste Prevention Week is a social media campaign. Don't forget to follow **@FoodWastePreventionWeek** on Facebook and Instagram, and **@savethefoodweek** on Twitter!

Chicago Conservation Corps Sustainability Leadership Training Series

Orientations offered March 4-18



The Chicago Conservation Corps is now recruiting for its **Spring 2023 Sustainability Leadership Training Series**. This program empowers Chicagoans to complete neighborhood sustainability and environmental

projects that impact and engage communities across the city.

To participate in the training course, you must be an adult Chicago resident, attend an orientation, and submit an application. **Applications are due March 22.**

To learn more, RSVP for an online or in-person orientation **HERE**.

IFSCC ICAW library call to action

The Illinois Food Scrap & Composting Coalition (IFSCC) is inviting public and institutional libraries across Illinois to join them in celebrating International Compost Awareness Week (ICAW) from **May 7-13**. The goal of ICAW is to increase the diversion of organics from the waste stream through awareness of and participation in composting. Educational centers like libraries are essential to ICAW's mission as they present a unique opportunity to provide a comprehensive array of resources directly to community members.

Here are a few of the ways libraries can participate:

- Display **compost-related books** for adults and children
- Invite an **expert** on soil health and compost to speak
- Host a **compost-themed story time** for children
- Connect with a local **garden club**



Read IFSCC's full press release and learn more ways libraries can get involved **HERE**.

CPS' Southside Occupational Academy featured in food rescue podcast



The [K-12 Food Rescue: A Food Waste Solution Podcast](#) follows the journeys of students and adult leaders across the country to lead the #FoodIsNotTrash movement in their school districts as they seek food waste solutions.

Listen to this [podcast](#) to hear the inspiring story of Regina Hawkins, a school teacher in Chicago, Illinois who noticed nutritious food being wasted and did something about it! Hawkins implemented share tables at Southside Occupational Academy to divert edible food from school lunches that would otherwise be thrown away. Students at her school rescue an average of 200 items a week to make sure that this food is feeding children and families instead of a landfill. Regina notes that starting zero waste programs is not always easy, but seeing how they benefit the community and the environment makes the extra effort worthwhile.

Celebrate Earth Hour!

March 25, 8:30 pm, local time

Celebrate the Earth in a whole new way! Earth Hour is a symbolic event to show support for the planet. On **March 25th at 8:30 pm**, spend an hour of your time doing something positive for the Earth. From picking up trash to learning about climate change, there are countless opportunities to get involved.



Learn more about Earth Hour [HERE](#).

Plastic Free Lunch Day

April 19

[Cafeteria Culture](#) is once again teaming up with the [Urban School Food Alliance](#) (USFA),



representing 18 of the nation's largest school districts, for a special April edition of [Plastic Free Lunch Day USA](#). Be inspired to join millions of public school students across the US for this special Earth-month climate action right in your cafeteria! Check out the new Plastic Free Lunch Day USA celebration video [HERE](#).

Why host a Plastic Free Lunch Day? U.S. schools serve 7.35 billion meals annually. Those meals are packed with single-use plastics and make a significant contribution to the U.S. plastic waste stream. Plastic Free Lunch Day is a great way to start eliminating unnecessary single-use plastics. If every school in the U.S. reduces 2 pieces of plastic per school lunch each day, that would amount to 10 billion pieces of plastic per school year!

Cafeteria Culture's award-winning student-led movie [Microplastic Madness](#) will screen [free](#) for all K-12 schools that lead a plastic-free action before April 30. Register for a screening [HERE](#) and get your K-12 packet of how-to materials, which includes everything you need to hold a successful event, [HERE](#). Start planning now to get food service director buy-in and to allow ample time to choose a menu that will facilitate going plastic-free.

Reserve your tickets for the One Earth Film Festival

March 3 - 12



Join [One Earth Collective](#) for the 12th annual [One Earth Film Festival](#) (OEFF). OEFF is the Midwest's premier environmental film festival creating opportunities for understanding climate change, sustainability, and the power of human involvement. Inspiring and thought-provoking

environmental films are followed by interactive post-film discussions focused on solutions.

This year's festival theme "Let's Get Loud!" is inspired by the words of [Dr. Katherine Hayhoe](#), a renowned climate scientist who has said that the most important thing we can do to fight climate change is to talk about it. OEFF is an opportunity to raise our voices and spread awareness about the urgent need to address the climate crisis, discuss actions-based solutions, and create real and lasting change.

View the film schedule and reserve your tickets [HERE](#).

Young Filmmakers Contest

Students from 3rd grade through age 25 are invited to submit their short environmental films to the [Young Filmmakers Contest](#) by **June 25, 2023**.

Winning films will be screened at the Gene Siskel Film Center (Chicago, Illinois) in September 2023 and/or at the One Earth Film Festival in March 2024. Scholarship awards, prizes, and matching grants (from \$100 to \$1000) are available for 3- to 8-minute films or 45+ second animations.

Center for Green Schools announces 2023 Best of Green Schools Award Recipients

In collaboration with the [Green Schools National Network](#), the [Center for Green Schools](#) announced the winners of the 2023 Best of Green Schools Award last week at the Green Schools Conference in New Orleans. This award celebrates the leaders - individuals, schools, campuses, and organizations - advancing the organizations' shared vision of green schools.



"The individuals and organizations being honored today inspire students, teachers, and entire communities who look to their schools as centers of community life," shares Anisa Heming, Director at the Center for Green Schools.

Read the full article [HERE](#) to learn more about the award recipients.

Grants and other opportunities

[2023 Green Difference Awards](#) Project Green Schools is an organization working to create and sustain environmental leaders within the community through education, volunteer service, and projects. They are looking for individuals within the school community to honor as Green Difference Makers. **Deadline: Mar. 24.**

[Project Green Schools Outdoor Classroom Challenge](#) Pre-K-12 schools across the country are invited to develop and implement a meaningful outdoor classroom and learning space that awards one Grand Prize of \$10,000 to further enhance an existing space or build a new space. Schools will submit a formal write-up, proposed budget, and design of their outdoor learning classroom/space. Project Green Schools will invite the top five designs to pitch their ideas to a panel of judges in Spring 2023 to determine the \$10,000 winner. **Deadline: Mar. 26.**

USDA Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Grants The competitive grants will support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects through two categories, Planning Projects and Implementation Projects. USDA will accept applications on [Grants.gov](https://www.usda.gov/grants). **Deadline: Mar. 27.**

School Nutrition Foundation Equipment Grants Eligible applicants have the opportunity to win equipment grants, each worth between \$20,000 to \$100,000 of equipment. The recipients will be notified in May of 2023. Applications and photos must be submitted by a school nutrition director. **Deadline: Mar. 31.**

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.**

Events

Meals that Heal: Bridging the Gap of Food Inequities at School

Mar. 14, 2pm cst

The Center for Environmental Health is hosting a free virtual town hall to explore the lunchroom. Hear from important changemakers fighting against systemic problems such as food insecurity, toxic chemicals, and food waste.

Loyola University's Climate Change Conference: Human Migration in the Era of Climate Change

Mar. 16, Damen Student Center, 6511 N. Sheridan Rd., Chicago

Loyola University Chicago's Climate Change Conference will explore how climate-driven migration will affect communities worldwide.

Re-imagine, Re-design & Re-cycle: School Waste Collection Systems That Work!

Mar. 22, 3pm cst

Join the Center for Green Schools and the Carton Council to learn from three different school district leaders about their recent innovations in bin design, construction, and placement, including students who are building their own receptacles and hallway recycling programs that are helping to maintain one districts' classroom eating program.

Living Schoolyards Act lecture series

Mar. 8 - May 25, (five-part series)

Join Green Schoolyards America for their webinar series to learn more about the Living Schoolyards Act. Each webinar in this series will highlight the benefits of living schoolyards and their impact on children and the community. The next installment will take place on **Mar. 28**. Register [HERE](#).

EEAI 2023 Conference EE In Action

Apr. 14 - 15, Stoney Creek Hotel & Conference Center, Moline, IL

This year's conference will focus on promoting the development of active and responsible citizens through sessions and workshops that promote hands-on learning and out-of-the-classroom experiences that bring students into the community. These experiences will help students expand their roles as learners and become active stewards of the environment. See registration options [HERE](#).

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