



# 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](#)

Thank you for your engagement in 2023.  
We look forward to bringing zero waste to  
many more schools in 2024!



Please consider an end-of-year [donation](#) to SGA to help us continue expanding our Zero Waste Schools initiatives throughout the Chicago metropolitan region. Your donation will help students take climate action each and every day in their own schools.

## COP28 inspires local action

Last month, on [WBEZ's Reset](#), radio host Sasha-Ann Simons interviewed River Forest Village President, Cathy Adduci, and two



local [It's Our Future](#) participants, Kate Wallace and Maiana Nelson, about their experiences at COP28 and their hopes for sustainable action back home in Illinois.

Local leader Cathy Adduci shared that participating in the Cross Climate Collaborative (C4), a regional collaborative supported by Seven Generations Ahead, inspired her to develop a more robust sustainability approach in her municipality. By attending COP28 she was able to tap into a global energy for local solutions and find inspiration for her work in getting to zero emissions in River Forest by 2050. Next steps for River Forest include more EV

infrastructure and reducing gas reliance in future developments. In the same interview, Oak Park and River Forest High School student Kate Wallace shared that she was excited to learn about new energy solutions, as she aspires to work as an engineer in the renewable energy field.

Maiana Nelson, a student at Riverside Brookfield High School, spoke with Reset about how she uses film to inspire her peers to reduce food waste. Maiana's film, "Fight Food Waste," will be screening at the Colorado Environmental Film Festival on Feb. 23. The film highlights the importance of reducing food waste and explains how food waste reduction plays a key role in solving the climate crisis. During COP28 Maiana visited Dubai's biggest farm to see the innovative technologies they use to farm in the desert and at home she's working to get composting started in her high school's kitchen and cafeterias.

You can listen to the entire WBEZ interview [HERE](#).

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## Local Food for Schools open enrollment closes soon!

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has allocated funds from the USDA for schools to purchase local, unprocessed, or minimally processed foods. This funding comes from the Local Food for Schools (LFS) program. School Food Authorities (SFA) can apply, before **Feb. 29**, to have their specific allotment held. Currently, SFAs that want to sign up for LFS funds can do so by simply completing [the LFS Agreement in WINS](#).



Effective March 1, 2024, SFAs not enrolled in LFS risk having their allocated funds reassigned to another actively participating SFA. SFAs wishing to join LFS post this date must contact ISBE staff at [localfoods@isbe.net](mailto:localfoods@isbe.net) to inquire about available funds.

The Local Food for Schools program is great way to promote fresher and more local produce to students. Locally sourcing food also promotes sustainability and strengthens local farms!

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## City of Chicago food scrap drop-off program

The city of Chicago has created [resources](#) to help Chicagoans learn more about their new food scrap drop-off program. The program offers 15 different free drop-off locations for Chicago residents that are spread through Chicago with locations in

**CHICAGO INTRODUCES NEW FOOD SCRAP DROP-OFF PROGRAM**

Hey Chicago, let's compost! The City of Chicago is launching its first-ever citywide **Food Scrap Drop-Off Program**. All Chicago residents are welcome to drop off their household food scraps for composting at one of 15 locations across the city - for **FREE!**

Composting is one of the easiest ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address the climate crisis. Composting keeps food scraps out of landfills and recycles nutrients to build healthy soils.

Scan the QR code or visit [www.ChicagoRecycles.org](http://www.ChicagoRecycles.org) to register for the program and learn how it works.






Morgan Park, West Englewood, Belmont Cragin, Irving park, and more.

By providing food scrap drop-off locations for free, Chicago aims to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions created by food waste sitting in landfills. Composting food scraps eliminates methane emissions and creates a nutrient dense addition to our soils.

To learn more about the program, click [HERE](#).

## Holiday lights collection

Not sure what to do with your non-working holiday lights? [Reduce Waste Chicago](#) is hosting its third-annual holiday lights collection featuring 10 more drop-off locations than last year. **Drop-off points will be open until Jan. 31.**

For a full list of locations and hours, please click [HERE](#). Please note that plastic bags or cardboard packaging will not be accepted.

The City of West Chicago is also running a collection program with 6 drop-off sites through **Jan. 19**. For hours and locations, click [HERE](#).

Did you know that you can also mail in your non-working holiday lights? HolidayLEDs offers year-round light recycling services. To find out more and for a full list of acceptable items, click [HERE](#).



## Reducing Food Waste in Food Service Kitchens: A Project in Erie County, New York



In a recent webinar, the Erie County Department of Environment & Planning shared case study results from a partnership with Metz Culinary Management, Leanpath, and the Northeast Waste Management Officials' Association (NEWMOA) in which they measured food waste and instituted reduction strategies in four healthcare settings.

Although the project faced setbacks and data irregularities due to the pandemic, the panelists were able to offer three solid recommendations

for reducing food waste that can also be applied to food service in school cafeterias:

- **Evaluate menu options.** From the Leanpath data in the case study it was clear that certain meals were favored over others, and adjusting the menus to reflect this decreased cafeteria waste.
- **Improve inventory management.** Most of the wasted food found in the case study was due to over-ordering and over-producing food before it was even served. Frequent, high quality monitoring of food needed and improvements in ordering would decrease food waste substantially.
- **Repurpose food by re-servicing** it in the cafeterias or by donating the leftover food. Anyone interested in the latter can find a food bank using this [Feeding](#)

For more details, read the full case study [HERE](#). View the webinar [HERE](#).

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## Green Schools Conference

March 5 - 7, 2024, Santa Fe, NM

The Green Schools Conference (GSC) is the only event to bring together all stakeholders involved in making green schools a reality: people who lead, operate, build, and teach in schools. Designed to educate, connect, and inspire, attendees of this three-day in person conference will explore interdisciplinary content during general sessions, while also having dedicated time with peers to work through specific challenges, share best practices, and generate momentum to further green school actions across the country.



The 2024 program will focus on those leading their schools and school systems toward whole school sustainability. Attendees will learn from each other and will have the opportunity to connect with other green school champions.

GSC is presented by the [Center for Green Schools](#) at the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), in partnership with the [Green Schools National Network \(GSNN\)](#).

Register [HERE](#).

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## Grants and other opportunities

[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.**

[School Nutrition Foundation Equipment Grants](#) Eligible applicants have the opportunity to win equipment grants, each worth between \$20,000 to \$100,000 of equipment. **Deadline: Mar. 29.**

[USDA Farm to School](#) USDA is now accepting applications for the next round of USDA Farm to School Grants, which support local child nutrition programs in serving more fresh and local foods. **Deadline: Jan. 12.**

[President's Environmental Youth Award](#) The President's Environmental Youth Award (PEYA) celebrates exceptional environmental stewardship initiatives crafted by K-12 youth. This program commends a diverse range of projects initiated by young students, school classes, clubs, camps, and youth organizations, all aimed at fostering environmental awareness and action in schools and communities. **Deadline: Jan. 15.**

[Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators](#) The Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators honors exceptional K-12 teachers who demonstrate creativity in environmental education. The award will be granted to up to two teachers from each of the Environmental Protection Agency's 10 regions, representing various states. **Deadline: Jan. 15.**

[Outdoor Classroom Challenge](#) Project Green Schools invites schools across the nation to participate in the Outdoor Classroom Challenge. The challenge encourages schools to create and implement meaningful outdoor classrooms and learning spaces. Participants have the chance to compete for a Grand Prize of \$10,000 to enhance existing outdoor

spaces or establish new ones. **Deadline: Jan. 19.**

**Partnerships for Local Agriculture & Nutrition Transformation in Schools (PLANTS) Grant** The Chef Ann Foundation is now accepting submissions for the PLANTS grant initiative. The grant will be awarded to 8 collaborative projects with the focus of transforming school food supply chains. Initiatives should aim to enhance connections community-based food systems and school districts and should promote scratch cooking in schools. **Deadline: Jan. 22.**

**SWANCC Waste Reduction Grant** The Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County (SWANCC) is allocating funds to SWANCC member schools to assist in purchasing materials that promote the education and benefits of waste prevention. Grant coordinators may **apply and request** up to \$500 to expand their reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting initiatives. **Deadline: Feb. 1.**

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## Events

### **Managing Eco-Anxiety through Outdoor Learning**

**Jan. 16, 6 pm**

Learn how to transform kids' eco-anxiety into eco-action with educators Stephanie Doyle and Nicole Forsyth. Discover practical ways and research on how Outdoor Learning and Environmental Action can address and manage eco-anxiety.

### **Household Food Waste: New Research on Why There's So Much**

**Jan. 17, 12 pm cst**

Half of all wasted food comes from households. MITRE and Gallup surveyed 9,000+ people, using an app to track household waste. Join Dana Gunders, Dr. Balca Alaybek, and John Aitken from MITRE to discuss the findings.

### **EPA Tools & Resources Webinar: Food Waste**

**Jan. 17, 2-3 pm cst**

Over 33% of US food goes uneaten, contributing to environmental harm through resource waste and methane emissions in landfills. New EPA reports, "From Field to Bin" and "Quantifying Methane Emissions," stress the vital need to reduce food waste and adopt eco-friendly disposal methods. This webinar presents key findings from the reports, emphasizing the urgency of keeping food out of landfills.

### **Leading Change: The Importance of Youth in Civic Engagement | Conservation in the Classroom**

**Jan. 18, 12:30 pm cst**

Join World Wildlife Fund to hear from Alexia Leclercq, a 22 year-old who has spearheaded numerous environmental justice campaigns. In this session she'll highlight key historical and organizing strategies used by oppressed communities for liberation, emphasizing the crucial role youth play in driving positive change for both people and the planet.

### **From Food to Flowers Everything Local Conference**

**Jan. 18, 2 - 4:30 pm, Springfield, IL**

This year, Illinois Farm to School Network (IFSN) welcomes school buyers to its conference for Everything Local insights. Partnering with the Illinois Farm Bureau, IFSN will debut Farm to School Ready trainings. School guests will have access to local procurement training, be able to explore the farmer vendor area, and join a networking event with the Land Connection.

### **19th Annual Chicago Food Justice Summit**

**Mar. 6 - 8**

This year the Chicago Food Justice Summit will be held both virtually and in-person. Join local leaders and food policy experts to help reimagine Chicago's foodscape. Participants will attend sessions about how to turn food policy into community action.

### **Loyola University Chicago: Climate Change Conference**

**Mar. 15-16**

Loyola University Chicago's 2024 Climate Change Conference unites experts to explore global climate impact on food security and discuss strategies for equitable, resilient food systems. The event aims to deepen understanding, foster practical solutions, and inspire action for a just and sustainable world. The

two-day conference at Damen Student Center includes a keynote, panels, a poster session, and an exhibitor hall, with an online option for the keynote.

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