



N E W S L E T T E R

Fall 2004

McLean County Solid Waste Management Program 2004

July 2004 marked the end of the sixth year that the Ecology Action Center has implemented the educational portions of the McLean County Solid Waste Management program, sharing administrative responsibilities with the McLean County Regional Planning Commission. As of July 1, division of responsibilities shared with the McLean County Regional Planning office was eliminated and the Ecology Action now has full responsibility for the implementation of the Solid Waste Plan as directed by the Solid Waste Technical Committee, a committee made up of the Solid Waste or Land Use Managers and Executive Administrators from the McLean County, City of Bloomington and Town of Normal Governments, the McLean County Regional Planning Commission and the McLean County Health Department.

The Ecology Action Center continues to produce instructions and information for residents of McLean County on how to recycle and a fourth grade recycling program is offered to all McLean County Schools. We also have a third grade clean water program for all Bloomington-Normal schools to encourage proper disposal of hazardous waste to prevent pollution of stormwater, and recycling programs for middle school students. We offer afterschool programs, speakers, coordination of electronics recycling, and battery recycling programs. Check out our website www.ecologyactioncenter.org for local recycling and waste information or call us at 454-3169 with your questions.

Bloomington– Normal Regional Energy Program

In April 2004, the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF) awarded the EAC \$9,468 in matching funds for a geothermal retrofit demonstration and energy display at the EAC. In July, Bratcher Heating and Air Conditioning installed a geothermal heat pump at the Hewett House. Additional funding was provided by the Town of Normal and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO).

From May 2002 to June 2004, the EAC administered the Town of Normal Community Energy Program (NCEP), which was funded by a grant from the Illinois DCEO. In June 2004, the Illinois DCEO awarded another two-year Regional Energy Program grant to the EAC, which was expanded to include the entire Bloomington-Normal community. The goal of the program is to raise awareness about energy issues and energy-efficiency among residents, small-to medium-sized businesses, and K-12 school children.

As part of the REP, we offer a free, 30-minute Energy-Saving Tips presentation to community groups. Energy awareness kits (valued at \$50) that include energy efficient light bulbs and other energy saving devices are distributed to seminar attendees.

The Business Energy Improvement Grant is available to registered businesses in the Bloomington-Normal community. We will grant up to 50% or up to \$500 for qualified energy improvement projects. Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis with the first round of proposals due October 15, 2004.

What's Happening at EAC

The Ecology Action Center is Ten Years Old!

To celebrate our aluminum anniversary we're having three events to commemorate three different stages of our evolution from Operation Recycle and our setting up shop in Hewett House.



Last Sunday's well-attended picnic was the first of the three. We thanked some of the folks who labored hard to fix up and decorate Hewett House starting on Sept 24, 1994. (There were many who came in evenings and weekends to scrape off layers of wallpaper, repair plaster, and paint.)

The setting for these honors was Nancy and Joe Armstrong's truly beautiful garden. The perfect weather, the delicious food, the attractive table settings, the garden-oriented program, and the congenial people made the afternoon a very pleasant one. And the teamwork continues. Helpful people volunteered from start to finish making light work for all--an Operation Recycle/Ecology Action Center tradition.

The second event will be in February to mark our move-in date. Open hours started on Feb. 9, 1995. At that time we'll honor our Operation Recycle founders and our first volunteers. We'll also kick off our Aluminum Fundraiser and announce the plans for our Earth Day Extravaganza.

Earth Day 1995 was our Grand Opening, with a ribbon to cut and two mayors to wield the scissors. There were kid's activities, readings, music, and food. The Tenth-Year format will change--we'll need a bigger venue for our growing membership--but the education and the fun will continue on April 22, 2005.

Our goal for this tenth year is to gain 100 new members. There are many people in this county who would be glad to help support environmental education if only they knew about the EAC. There are others, some we know, who think we're doing a good job, but who don't realize that we're a membership organization, counting on the contributions of people in the community. Please help us spread the word that the Ecology Action Center is here to serve the

people of McLean County and protect and improve our own local environment.

Thanks to all the great donors, volunteers and staff who made the picnic possible. The following businesses made in-kind contributions:

McDonalds
Let's Party
Enchantment

Merci!

Did you attend our picnic and lose a white sweater? It is a zippered white cardigan with slash pockets, size ladies XL. We have it.

Meet the Interns

Matt Narter is a junior at Illinois State University. He is a Computational Physics Major with a math minor. This semester at EAC he will be helping out with our educational programs and the Mackinaw River Display.

Carolyn Marinier is a senior at Illinois Wesleyan University. She is a biology major and an environmental studies minor. This semester she will be working on a display for the Geothermal Heating system and helping with the school program.

Kristina Wright is a junior at Illinois State University. She is an agriculture education major. This semester at EAC she will be working on a farm to cafeteria project which involves working with local schools and farmers and helping with our educational programs

Ryanne Folck is a junior at Illinois State University. She is an english education major. This semester at EAC she will be working on newsletters and school programs.



Geothermal- Some Pros and Cons

When heating a building, a system driven by electricity or a fossil fuel such as oil, propane or natural gas seems to be the only options to regulate the temperature of a house. With prices of natural gas on the rise and our awareness of environmental issues, there is a growing need for greater efficiency. Geothermal systems offer many benefits with few drawbacks.

Geothermal heat pumps utilize heat from the earth to not only heat homes but also to cool them. Geothermal is a heat transfer system which works by transferring the heat 4-6 feet below the ground, which remains at a year round temperature of approximately 55 °F, through a system of underground coils. As the anti-freeze solution flows into the home through the coils, a compressor, condenser, evaporator, and expansion valve all work together, powered by electricity, to regulate the temperature of the home. A geothermal heat pump does not manufacture heat or create cold air, rather the pump works to move warm and cold from one location to another.

Although installing a geothermal system costs about twice as much as a traditional furnace and central air conditioning, the reduced amount of energy required to run the system makes energy bills much lower. Over time, geothermal pays for itself, and savings continue for the life of the system. In addition, because less energy is required, millions of tons less CO₂ are released, carbon monoxide emissions are reduced and we decrease our dependence on foreign oil.

A geothermal system does not release pollution at the building site, unlike a natural gas system. However, because electricity is required to run the system, it is not a pollution-free alternative. In Illinois, since our electricity primarily comes from coal and nuclear power plants, our electricity use always releases pollution. If renewable electricity sources are available in the future, these very efficient geothermal systems may be emissions-free.

Yard Smart Update

The Yard Smart Program was launched this summer and continues to grow. Yard Smart, sponsored by JWP Audubon, Living Upstream and the EAC to promote healthier and more ecologically sound yards now has over 25 participants. You can apply to be a part of Yard Smart, visit www.ecologyactioncenter.org for application materials.



Cloth Bags

Getting tired of those pesky plastic bags starting to pile up? Then its time to do away with them!! The EAC is still selling cloth bags for \$4.00 a piece. Using a cloth bag to carry your groceries in is a great way to help the environment. Plastic bags cause litter and are responsible for killing 100,000 whales, seals, turtles and other marine animals each year worldwide. So the next time you have to choose between paper or plastic, choose neither and put your groceries in your cloth bag. You can purchase your cloth bag at the Ecology Action Center in Normal or at Common Ground. Hurry, over half are already sold and the rest are going fast!!



McLean County Recycles Day Art Contest

The Ecology Action Center is sponsoring an art contest for children grades K-8th grade.

For kids in kindergarten through 5th grade, they should draw their version of a recycling superhero. Students can create their own superhero or base their design on an existing cartoon, as long as it has something to do with recycling. The children can use crayons, markers, or colored pencils. The picture must have the name of the recycling superhero somewhere on the drawing.

For kids in grades 6th-8th, their superhero must be 3D. It must be made from recycled material such as cans or plastic bottles, or old trash. It must be at least 1 foot high off the ground and free standing. It can be painted and needs to have the superhero wearing a name badge with the superhero's name.

All art projects must be turned in by November 8th to the Ecology Action Center before 6 p.m. Be sure the child's name, grade, school and telephone number are clearly marked on the art project. There will be multiple prizes, including 9 winners from grades K-5th and 4 winners from grades 6th-8th. For any questions call the Ecology Action Center at 309-454-3169.

Recycle Ecology Action Center Newsletter by passing it on to someone else after you have read it.



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This newsletter funded by the
McLean County Solid Waste Program

Don't Throw your Junk out, Freecycle it!! **ENERGY ANALYSIS TOOLS AVAILABLE**

In an effort to reduce waste, The Ecology Action is administering a free online exchange group. By going to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/McFreecycle/> and becoming a member, you'll be able to give and receive free items as you wish. This new online group, which already has over 200 members, allows people to post their unwanted items online, while checking out what others have to offer. In a sense, it is like an online garage sale. And the best part about this new group is that it's all free!! So the next time you go to throw away a pile of junk, stop and go online to see if someone could benefit from your old things.

We placed two Kill-A-Watt Meters at Normal Public Library for patrons to borrow free for 7-day intervals. You can use the Kill-A-Watt Meter to identify the energy wasters in your home or business. To assess the efficiency of appliances that use up to 1800 watts, simply plug the Kill-A-Watt Meter into your outlet, then plug your appliances into the Kill-A-Watt Meter. The large LCD display will count consumption by the kilowatt-hour, just like your local utility company. What can you do with the Kill-A-Watt Meter? If you know what rate the utility company charges per kilowatt-hour, you can calculate your electrical expenses for each appliance by the day, month, or year. You can evaluate the quality of the electrical power provided by your utility company by monitoring the voltage, line frequency, and power factor. You can detect voltage drops and brownout conditions before they damage delicate equipment. You

can gain valuable knowledge about the electrical equipment in your building and save money by becoming more energy efficient.

If you are serious about measuring your energy consumption, we have a professional "Watts Up? Pro meter" at the Ecology Action Center. It is a power analyzer and data logger for appliances up to 1800 watts. It can be plugged in for a long period of time, then the data can be downloaded to your computer. We will check it out at no charge to interested individuals.