



Recycling Mania

Collegiate competition promotes campus recycling.

A little college rivalry never hurt anyone — in fact in some cases, it can help. At least that was the thought when Ohio University's (OU) Refuse and Recycling Manager, Ed Newman, created a competition to see which college could recycle the most.

The competition, dubbed Recycle Mania, began in 2001 between OU and Florida's Miami University as a way to engage students in recycling and to determine which school could collect the largest amount of

recyclables from on-campus apartments, residence halls and dining facilities in a 10-week period. The competition was a perfect way to generate student and administration involvement and excitement about recycling, and Miami was a natural rival because the two colleges already compete in the same sporting conference, Newman says.

Based on those schools' success, Bowling Green (BGSU), Bowling Green, Ohio, and Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., joined the competition in 2002.

As part of the contest, each school was outfitted with recycling containers to collect their goods. Contest-acceptable recyclables included office paper, newspaper, books, junk mail, cans, bottles (glass, metal, steel and plastic) and cardboard (baled and unbaled boxes). Each school was responsible for measuring their recyclables and accurately reporting numbers based on daily weighing.

"All [competitors'] measurements were reported as pounds recycled per student living on campus," Newman says, "so the number of students was divided by whatever the weekly recycled total was, and that per capita figure was the score."

BGSU was fairly efficient at measuring because the school hauls its own solid waste and has access to a truck scale close to campus. However, weighing was more difficult for OU because it had to work with its public utility vendor on collection and measurement.

Ultimately, BGSU was the 2002 Recycle Mania winner with a total of 32.7 recycled pounds per student. OU placed second with 31.8; Miami placed third with 29.6; and Harvard followed with 28.7 pounds per student.

The spoils for the winner were bragging rights, ad space in rival schools' newspapers and a one-of-a-kind trophy made from recycled materials. Craig Wittig, BGSU's recycling coordinator, reports that the competition was a cost-effective way of generating student excitement about recycling. "We didn't spend much money," he says. "We probably had about \$500 in [costs], counting labor and materials."

Harvard's waste manager, Rob Gogan, agrees, reporting slim spending on the contest. For example, to promote Recycle Mania, the schools relied pri-



FRIENDLY COMPETITION: Four colleges battled to see which could recycle the most from campus apartments, residence halls and dining facilities in a 10-week period to win a trophy (above) and bragging rights.

marily on e-mail, websites and campus newspapers. Harvard notified students about the contest via dorm newsletters, an e-mail campus recycling update, placed ads in the *Harvard Crimson* newspaper, and displayed posters on the school's shuttle buses and in dining rooms. BGSU also used an intra-collegiate website to spread the word and to provide weekly results.

"Our general campus e-mail provided an easy, inexpensive way to blanket the campus," Wittig says.

Despite finishing first or fourth place, event coordinators agreed that Recycle Mania was a good way to encourage recycling, and the concept holds promise for other organizations, such as municipalities and schools.

"Three of the four of us in the 2002

competition were in the same conference, so that manufactures a natural rivalry," Wittig says. "But municipalities

The [Recycle Mania] concept holds promise for other organizations, such as municipalities and schools ... And school or municipality size does not matter because the per capita scoring rules level the playing field.

are right beside each other and probably have a rivalry as well. The same [goes for] sporting conferences in high schools." And school or municipality size does not matter because the per capita scoring rules level the playing field, he says.

"People relate to a recycling competition a lot more than someone preaching from the pulpit of the recycling church," Newman adds, noting all participants have to do is "determine the number of people you have, target what recycling you're going to have, figure out [how] to measure and weigh it, and then tally your numbers."

Going forward, Newman is looking for more colleges and universities to compete in 2003. "We have presented this to our peers ... and a few took interest," he says. "We're also slated to give ... a presentation at the National Recycling Conference this year in Austin, Texas."

— Carol Badaracco Padgett
Contributing Editor
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