

PORT & RESOURCE RECOVERY DEPARTMENT

Brown County



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Recycling: Good to the very last drop of milk

First year of school milk carton recycling program comes to an end

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(Brown County, WI) As the school year winds down to a close, so does the first year of a new school milk carton recycling program. Last year, Brown County Resource Recovery provided resources to eight schools in in the Ashwaubenon, De Pere, Green Bay and Howard-Suamico school districts to get the recycling program in motion; and the results have been noteworthy. According to an estimate from the Carton Council, milk carton recycling programs at just these eight schools will keep an average of 20,700 pounds out of the landfill yearly.

“The program began with a grant from the Carton Council,” explained Resource Recovery Business Manager Mark Walter. “Our goal the first year was to work with two pilot districts in the county to develop educational materials and demonstrate how impactful this carton recycling program could be for other school districts.”

Sarah Chisholm from Tri-County Recycling worked closely with the schools to implement the program. “Our initial meetings with school officials went very well; they were all asking themselves, ‘how have we not been doing this for years?’ In addition to getting the milk carton recycling program started, we worked with them to review and improve current methods of lunchroom recycling. We then provided recycling bins, catchy signs and toolkits to get them started. Our ultimate goals were to help them save money, decrease trash waste and get kids excited about recycling.”

After learning of the pilot program, Lynette Zalec, food service director for the Green Bay Area Public School District, reached out to Brown County Resource Recovery to see if they could be part of the program. One school in particular, Wequiock Elementary in Green Bay, was especially enthusiastic about the program.

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“We really wanted to kick off this recycling program the right way,” explained Zalec. “So we had an event where 4th grade students did some research on their own and made posters that explained recycling. They also made an announcement on the intercom about recyclable items. The kids were excited about it and felt very proud. It really prompted the entire school to get involved.”

Since Wequiock Elementary adopted the program in January 2017, they have already seen a positive difference in the amount of recyclables and waste. A half bag of cartons at the end of each day increased to a full bag, and seven trash bags went down to six. According to the Carton Council, Wequiock Elementary alone will keep 1,035 pounds of material out of the landfill each year.

The individual schools involved in the recycling program pilot were: Ashwaubenon High School, Parkview Middle School, Pioneer Elementary School, Valley View Elementary School, Cormier School & Early Learning Center, De Pere High School, Wequiock Elementary and Bayview Middle School. Brown County Resource Recovery will continue to work to make carton recycling part of every school’s recycling program. If every school in the county recycled their cartons, more than 220,000 pounds would be kept out of the landfill and recycled!

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