

# save it.

PPS resource  
conservation  
newsletter  
winter 2011

## Sustainability in the Lunchroom

A lot goes into making school lunches happen. In Portland Public Schools there are 85 school sites that feed about 21,500 students daily. These students need access to healthy, nutritious food that can be served and managed in lunch periods that are often less than 20 minutes long. Food has to be delivered to



Nutrition Services prepares to crush and recycle food containers.

the schools, prepared, served, cleaned up and stored with as little waste as possible and within an extremely tight budget. Nutrition Services manages this process and puts forth a great effort not only to make sure students have access to healthy food, but to streamline the process to be as sustainable as possible.

The focus of many people who visit school lunchrooms is on the trays used to plate food. Nutrition Services has successfully enabled 28 schools to switch to washable, reusable plastic trays. While the other schools are eager to ditch the traditional Styrofoam trays for the more sustainable option, Nutrition Services is working hard to make sure a number of things are in place. The cafeteria employees need extra time budgeted into their already strapped schedules to wash and dry the trays, there has to be sufficient space to dry and store the trays, and the dishwashers and the infrastructure that supports them must be able to handle extra loads of hot water. Some sites, where there is enough room, require new... continued on pg. 2.

## SUN Schools, Green Clubs

One eager group of kids is planning a waste-reduction lunch skit, while a similar group aims to eliminate one of their school's dumpsters. These two ideas, among many, arose at recent SUN green team meetings at Peninsula and James John elementary schools... continued on pg. 3

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## do it: party packs



Students at Ainsworth Elementary use their Party Packs to save on waste

During the holiday season, parties take place in many classrooms. Often these parties include food and drink, which means plates and cups. Celeste Lewis, a parent from Ainsworth Elementary, noticed the large amounts of paper plates and cups being thrown away at these events and decided to do something about it. She put together Party Packs, sets of colorful plastic plates and cups for each classroom to use, and reuse when they have parties. This simple idea has not only saved hundreds of paper plates and cups from being sent to the landfill but has added to the environmental consciousness of the school.

## Fork it Over Feeds Portland

When students leave to go on break, school kitchens are often left with perishable leftovers. Rather than let this food go to waste, Nutrition Services teams up with local food agencies to get this food out to hungry people in Portland. Over both Thanksgiving and winter breaks, 5,939 lbs of food were donated to the community. The Fork It Over program has enabled PPS to donate about 127,280 lbs over the past 7 years.

## Sustainability in the Lunchroom (continued from pg.1)

...dishwashers as well as upgraded plumbing before they will be able to wash the trays. Fortunately, Nutrition Services has received city funding to purchase trays for 17 more schools, and at an additional 12 once dishwashers are upgraded.

Although they are a very visible part of the lunchroom, reusable trays are only one aspect of how Nutrition Services strives for sustainability. They work hard to track food and supply cost, transportation, and packaging to make efficient and cost effective choices. In the past 3 years, over \$250,000 and thousands of pounds of food have been saved by tracking perishable food to use before it expires. Over 32% of the food is purchased locally and, when possible, leftover perishables are donated to local agencies to feed hungry people in Portland through the Fork It Over program. Equipment upgrades in the last year have accounted for more efficient insulated warmers, Energy Star convection ovens at 17 schools, and sink sprayers that use only 1.2-1.4 as opposed to 2-4 gallons per minute.

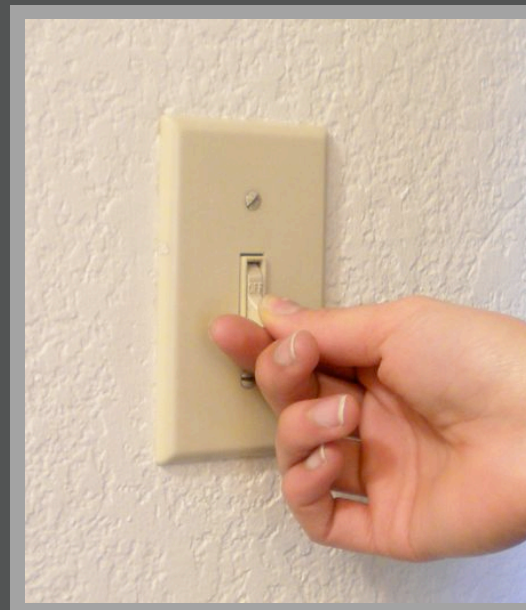
Nutrition Services is doing a lot of great things but there are many ways you can help. If your school has a dishwasher, hold a silverware drive and switch to permanent silverware to eliminate the cost and waste of disposable plastic ware. Notify the cafeteria lead when classes will be taking field trips to save food from being prepared for students who will not be there. And, most importantly, encourage your students to eat cafeteria food. When more money is received from lunchroom sales, Nutrition Services is able to provide higher quality food and is able to implement and support programs like reusable trays.

## Flipping the Switch on Behavior

It's not easy being green. Well, it might not seem easy anyway. Being "green" or, rather, making sustainable living choices can mean driving less, changing out light bulbs and appliances, reducing waste, reusing bags and containers, and turning down the heat. For many people, these are not necessarily things that are built into daily routines and can seem like a hindrance to an already busy schedule. So how can we convince people to come to the "green" side without looking like the bad guy?

To begin to inspire behavior change we first have to understand who we are. We're not necessarily the "rational actor" of psychological theory, making decisions based on the direct gain for self. In fact, we can be particularly irrational in our decision making, basing much of what we choose to do on whether or not our peers are doing it.

A recent study showed that people made more of a decrease in home energy use not when given a monetary incentive, but rather when they were able to see on their energy bills the amounts that their neighbors were saving...continued [on pg. 3



## SUN Schools, Green Clubs (continued from pg. 1)

During their waste audit on January 18th, the students at Peninsula noticed all the plastic bags, food wrappers, and other lunch waste in their garbage. Led by three teachers, the group talked about simple ways to reduce that waste, such as bringing juice in reusable bottles and food in reusable Tupperware.

But they craved changing more than just their own habits. These fourth and fifth graders have decided to spread their message to the younger grades by entertaining them with a funny skit. They'll spend the next several Tuesday afternoons planning their play, along with other engaging discussions, including a presentation from Laura Knudson about her global Green Living Project [<http://www.greenlivingproject.com>].

Meanwhile, the student green team at James John takes a bold step toward reducing trash by initiating a milk carton recycling system in their cafeteria. This group, which recently expanded from a teacher-led gathering at lunch to an afterschool SUN club, is famous at James John for its Power Patrol. Bearing name badges and a clip board, the students visit classrooms during lunch to ensure that unoccupied rooms do not have lights or computers on.

This group is also rightfully proud of their recent reusable silverware drive, and the kids can't wait to take care of their new worm bin. When asked why they like being on the green team, they exclaimed, "helping the community," "helping the planet," and "because it's fun!"

## Flipping the Switch on Behavior (continued from pg. 2)

...An emoticon next to kilowatt hours was either happy or sad, depending on if the consumer was doing better or worse than the average of their neighborhood. People cared more about fitting in and looking good in front of their neighbors than they did about monetary incentives.

Another common misconception is that people will react to shocking statistical information. While it may be interesting and important to say that the world is going to heat up by 3 degrees and cause flooding and droughts all over the globe if we don't do something now, it won't necessarily get people to ride their bike to work. People don't want to feel like they are part of a problem and not many people think that anything they do will make a difference on the global level. So, instead, display the number of miles people in your building have ridden to work and acknowledge their efforts. If you make people seem like smart, thoughtful consumers who are part of the solution instead of part of the problem, you'll get more people on board with positive change.

Other things to keep in mind include the fact that people must be fairly satisfied with their current conditions before they will be willing to change. Images are often more powerful than words. People have to have access to resources to make change. Positivity is more powerful than negativity. Personal competence is important: people need to feel like they have made the smart, thoughtful choice and need to be acknowledged once they do. Make the benefits of change as clear and present as possible. And most importantly, normalize the behavior you seek by modeling it yourself, acknowledging it, and making it the default choice.

So never say it's not easy being green. Instead say that it's easy, fun, smart, comes loaded with awesome benefits and everybody's doing it!

## Oregon Green School Update

Oregon Green Schools is preparing for their annual Summit, held on April 25th in Salem, and schools are ramping up their efforts to make sure they are certified before registration opens on Feb. 22nd. Congratulations go out to Ainsworth, Beverly Cleary, Beach, and Peninsula for becoming the most recent Green Schools in PPS. Markham, Cleveland, Woodstock, Alameda and Stephenson will also be joining the ranks by the end of February. For information on how to get your school certified contact Anders at [achriste@pps.k12.or.us](mailto:achriste@pps.k12.or.us). For information about Oregon Green Schools or to find details about the Summit, visit [www.oregongreenschools.org](http://www.oregongreenschools.org)

## learn it: wind power



photo by: Sebastian Cellis

-Groundbreaking for a wind turbine at Skyline K-8 School has been planned for late February.

-The turbine has a 2.6 kW capacity, about enough to power a small home, but its output is entirely dependant on the wind.

-The 60 ft. turbine features a rotor blade diameter of 3.6 meters (about 10.8 ft.)

-Built by Abundant Renewable Energy, the turbine will go up near Skyline blvd. east of the playing field.



Some of the 280 bulbs removed from James John elementary

## James John De-lamps

As an effort to conserve electricity, James John elementary decided to remove some of their T-8 fluorescent bulbs. Jane Harold, a 4th and 5th grade teacher and Green Team leader, surveyed teachers and worked with Anders Christensen and Arianna Lambie to map out areas of the school where de-lamping would be possible. With the help of Melodie Welch, a custodian at James John, 280 bulbs were removed from ballasts in the hallways, cafeteria, and classrooms where there was excess light. An estimated 11,144 kWh of electricity and about \$800 will be saved annually from the removal. The excess bulbs will be used to replace burned out bulbs in other schools as needed and, at \$2 per bulb, will save PPS an additional \$560.

To find out if it may be possible to de-lamp at your school, contact Anders at [achriste@pps.k12.or.us](mailto:achriste@pps.k12.or.us) to schedule an initial survey.

## 20 Teachers and Parents Share Sustainable Resources

With a new name to reflect their far-reaching influence, Sustainability Coordinators (formerly Recycling Coordinators) pooled ideas at the latest SC Meeting on January 12th.

These teachers and parents from various elementary, middle, and high schools in PPS brainstormed the most effective approaches to several pressing environmental issues at their schools.

The most common concerns among this group include reducing cafeteria waste, saving energy, and changing norms. Among many tips, teachers shared a way to recycle empty glue containers, detailed methods of milk carton recycling, and strategies for recruiting and optimizing parent involvement. To learn more, visit the Best Practices [<http://www.pps.k12.or.us/departments/facilities/5005.htm>] web page, or email [achriste@pps.k12.or.us](mailto:achriste@pps.k12.or.us) for the meeting minutes.

## resources.

For information on PPS recycling procedures, a list of best practices, Oregon Green School updates, Electricity Incentive updates, and much more please visit the PPS Sustainability site:

<http://www.pps.k12.or.us/departments/facilities/2749.htm>

Please join us for the next **Sustainability Coordinator's Meeting:**

Wednesday, March 9th at 4pm  
BESC Dixon Dining Room  
(2nd floor, front of building)  
501 N. Dixon  
Portland, OR, 97227

If you have any questions about current programs and procedures, if you want to know how to become an Oregon Green School, or if you'd like help starting a project at your school, please contact us:

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