4. Education and Awareness – How to Get the Word Out!

If your goal is to educate the campus community about plastics reduction and recycling, please review the following tips when developing your action plan:

- Start with easy ways to reduce plastic usage and easy ways to recycle plastic trash. Then introduce more intensive level actions.
- Highlight the impacts of plastic pollution to wildlife and humans. You never know what is going to make an impression and what will encourage people to act.
- Bring It Home – Where is your closest river or other body of water? Plastic and other pollution sometimes ends up in our freshwater and marine systems. It’s important to discard trash responsibly and recycle when possible. Create a map to the nearest pond, lake, river, or sea coast. Then post it on campus and title it “This is where your trash could end up. Recycle and discard your trash responsibly.”

- Ensure your communications are:
  - Simple and straightforward
  - Fun
  - Creative
  - Include engagement opportunities
  - Include information on how to learn more and ask questions

- Develop an education, communication and recognition plan in coordination with the marketing/communications department and/or the arts department to help with the creativity and visuals!

- Make a list of campus groups that might be interested in getting involved:
  - Incoming freshmen (share this guide with freshmen centers and student activities for freshmen orientation and/or freshmen 101 classes)
  - Dorm residents (share this guide with housing and residence life and resident advisors [RAs])
  - Student government
  - Environmentally related clubs
  - Dining facilities
The bad news...

Globally, only 9% of recyclable plastic is actually recycled
(National Geographic)

Trash kills wildlife >
It’s estimated that ingestion of plastic kills 1 million marine birds and 100,000 marine animals each year
(One Green Planet)

Trash harms habitat >
5.25 trillion plastic particles in the ocean from food and beverage containers, microbeads from personal care items, etc.
(One Green Planet)

The good news...

In 2019, RecycleMania campuses:

Cut out 300 million single-use plastic containers

Recycled and composted 69.5 million pounds of waste

Prevented the release of 99,254 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO2E) into the atmosphere, equivalent to preventing annual emissions from 20,895 cars

Make the connection to wildlife and habitat - Highlight the harmful impacts that plastics and other trash can have on the natural environment, and how campus actions to reduce waste and increase recycling can make a difference.