**Rotary Club Environmental Project Idea: Help reduce waste at local events!**

A fun way for clubs to engage in local events is to help monitor waste stations. The aim is to divert recycling and organics from trash bins by helping event attendees understand the difference, as well as replacing carts/bins/collection locations as needed. This generally begins well ahead of the event by having a conversation with the event organizers. Find out what’s available within the systems already in place and establish overall goals. In Duluth, for example, Harvest Fest aims for zero waste (and is about 95% of the way there). The Duluth-Superior EcoRotary Club monitors 4 waste stations with 2 volunteers at each one, for 2-hour shifts throughout the day. We also have our club tent and information set up at the main waste station location and get lots of traffic from visitors!

TIME REQUIRED: pre-event meeting(s), day-of set up and break down, post-event report

# VOLUNTEERS: depends on the size of the venue and length of the event. Generally, 2 volunteers per waste station per shift. This can be a great way to engage family and friends in a Rotary project…

BUDGET NEEDED: $0

Begin by meeting with the event organizers to create a recycling/waste diversion plan and goals for the event. Be realistic but ready to make an impact!

Next consult the venue managers and relevant trash management companies regarding event waste, especially if this is a new initiative. Find out what services can be provided (What exactly can be recycled? Can organics be composted or does that involve someone else? Are there larger dumpsters on the grounds that might require monitoring?)

Specify waste bins for the event, including trash, recycling and organics/compost, and place them strategically in limited locations. This will minimize the number of volunteers that you need, and will help to ensure contact with anyone throwing anything away.

Reduce printing through centralized signage or billboards at the event. Sandwich boards work well to help spread the message that “this is a zero waste event” or “all cups are made of cornstarch and can be composted,” for instance. The same goes for general event announcements and even maps.

Generate excitement! Have fun and enjoy getting to meet people – the vast majority just want to do their best and help the planet, too. This volunteer opportunity is as much about education as it is about trash.

Help vendors comply with the event standards. This most likely will fall to the actual event organizers, but volunteers can do a quick double-check of what sorts of materials to expect from the vendors on the day of the event. You may even want to create a sample “what goes where” board using actual items like napkins, cups and utensils. Tape these to the bin or make a sign that can be reused next year.

At the end of the day, ensure that collected waste ends up where it belongs and is not cross-contaminated (which often results in everything going to the landfill). Keep a tally of your totals so that you can break your record next time! Then report back to the event organizers, the venue and Rotary about how things went. Please send the Environment Committee a photo and a quick summary of your accomplishments. Celebrate!

Section II - How to Create a Sustainable Event

(from “Sustainable Event Planning Guide” - Denver 2008 DNC Convention)

A. LEADERSHIP

* Articulate sustainable goals to partners early in the planning process
* Use written agreements to ensure full cooperation
* Be realistic when devising your strategy and setting your goals
* Document your success

Your leadership role comes with unique opportunities to

impact not only your event but venue managers, suppliers,

and the partner agencies involved. As a leader, one of your

responsibilities is to set sustainable goals to lessen the

impact of your event on the environment. The following

are guidelines for articulating those goals to stakeholders

including sponsors, facility managers, suppliers, and other

partners.

ARTICULATE SUSTAINABLE GOALS TO PARTNERS

EARLY IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

A successful event begins with communicating goals

and objectives to key players involved. This is especially

true for organizing a successful sustainable event. The

key players, including vendors, caterers, event planners,

venue managers, and sponsors, need to understand your

intentions from the very start of the process. By making

your event more sustainable, you have the opportunity to

leave a positive legacy and help all partners move in the

right direction.

USE WRITTEN AGREEMENTS TO ENSURE FULL

COOPERATION

Written documents and tools can help manage

expectations and accountability with your suppliers

and partners. Create a Request for Proposal (RFP) with

sustainability criteria. Send RFPs to each venue you are

considering. (See page 44 for sample RFP language). Once

you select the venue, caterers or other suppliers, you can

create a contract or memorandum of understanding that

restates activities you have agreed to. Incorporate language

about sustainable practices into your contracts with venues

and throughout the entire supply chain related to your

event. Creating a more sustainable event is an opportunity

to leave a positive legacy by helping the venue take a step in

the right direction. This is precisely what occurred with the

Colorado Convention Center in 2006, when the U.S. Green

Building Council held their annual Greenbuild Expo and

initiated a robust recycling and composting program. Two

years later, the Convention Center developed their own

program and was able to recycle and compost 70% of the

total waste generated at the 2008 Democratic National

Convention. Other events held at this venue are also

recycling, as well as composting upon request.

BE REALISTIC WHEN DEVISING YOUR STRATEGY

AND SETTING YOUR GOALS

Your sustainable goals and objectives will vary from one

event to another depending on its size. The diversion rate

of an event is the percentage of total waste diverted from

the landfill. Events and meetings that offer no recycling

options have a 0% diversion rate. An event that captures all

of its waste through recycling and composting would have

a 100% diversion rate. While 100% may not be realistic,

some events have reported rates as high as 98%, which are

possible only when the event planners have total control

over all materials used. A realistic diversion rate for larger

events is 90%.5

DOCUMENT YOUR SUCCESS

A successful event leader will define and outline specific

green goals, devise a strategy for achieving each goal,

and document success. See Page 52 for a Sustainable

Events Checklist. Familiarize yourself with this checklist

as you are planning an event. It may give you ideas as

you go along, and at the end of the event, it will help you

summarize your results so others can learn from your

efforts. Additionally in the Appendix, we’ve provided case

studies (page 22) which can give you additional ideas when

documenting success.