Underfunded, Underutilized
Students Express Feelings About Recycling on Campus

By Rebekah Miller
Contributing Writer

"In a lifetime, the average American will throw away 600 times his or her adult weight in garbage," states Recyclying101.com. "This means that each adult will leave a legacy of 90,000 pounds of trash for his or her children." Facts like these contribute to the widely held belief that recycling is essential to keeping the earth healthy. Evidence of such a belief on the EMU campus, however, is rare.

Junior Jacinta Nafziger is passionate about recycling. She regularly walks an empty plastic bottle across campus until she can reach a recycling bin. However, most students at EMU don’t share her commitment to recycling. For some, this lack of commitment comes from a general apathy about the issue. Junior Sonya Marshall (name has been changed to protect anonymity) admitted, "I don’t really care about the environment."

Other students may know the importance of recycling but don’t always carry through when the time comes to throw away their trash. Junior Rachel Koppenhaver said, "I just don’t think about it. Sure, recycling is good, but when I go to throw away a soda can, I don’t even think about recycling it. Throwing it away simply doesn’t enter my mind."

Thaddeus Hollingsworth, Student Government Association co-president, recognizes the need for more recycling on campus. He said, "The biggest problem is a lack of recycling containers in public areas." SGA hopes to increase the awareness of recycling on campus and possibly work with the cafeteria to increase its recycling efforts. SGA currently has not made plans regarding this issue.

While it may not be a high priority among students, a recycling program does exist at EMU. In an arrangement with the city of Harrisonburg, the recycling that EMU generates is picked up at no cost to the university. In most cases, recycling centers reward cash refunds for recyclable items. EMU exchanges the possibility of refunds for free pick-up.

"Sure, recycling is good, but when I go to throw away a soda can, I just put it in the nearest trash can."

This arrangement does make recycling profitable in the long run. According to Eldon Kurtz, director of Physical Plant, EMU has a contract to pay $40 per ton to dispose of the trash that is collected on campus, while recycling is taken away for free. Simply stated, the more plastic bottles, paper and aluminum cans that are put into recycling, the less trash weight which EMU must pay to get rid of.

Nafziger believes in order to increase others’ recycling efforts, more recycling bins are needed on campus. Kurtz estimates that each bin costs $20. Placing a bin every wastebasket would require hundreds of dollars. In addition, an increase in bins would necessitate increased organization and increased labor for the custodial and grounds staff. "The ideal situation would be to hire someone to manage recycling on campus. The addition of this labor would cost EMU $20,000–25,000 a year," said Kurtz.

Rachel Koppenhaver and Lynette Nussbaum have considered solutions for campus recycling as a part of their Exploring the Peacebuilding Arts class. After analyzing the data provided by Kurtz and assessing their own experience concerning recycling on campus, they developed a list of seven locations where recycling bins for plastic, glass, aluminum and tin are needed. They recommended that additional bins be placed in the Snack Shop and at other locations in the Commons, in the Campus Center in the basement of the Science Center, and by the athletic fields. Finding funds for only seven additional bins on campus seems possible, according to Koppenhaver and Nussbaum.

The biggest bump in the road comes from the increase in labor that the seven bins would require.

Koppenhaver and Nussbaum are currently working on an awareness video that will be presented along with other factual information to the custodial and grounds staff in an effort to demonstrate the importance of increased recycling and accompanying increased labor.

Alcohol Awareness Week Fun

By Noelle Selb
Staff Writer

A survey in 2001 revealed that six percent of college students were diagnosed with alcohol dependence. Next week, EMU students can be creatively informed about substance abuse, with the help of the Substance Education Council (SEC), during Alcohol Awareness Week.

According to Michelle Steffen, Residence director of Hillside and coordinator of the SEC, this group is composed of "students, faculty and staff who plan programs to help students make well-informed, healthy choices regarding substances use." Because Alcohol Awareness Week runs beyond Halloween, it is the Council’s objective not only to provide educational and informative programs for students, but many fun activities as well.

The SEC has three main goals for Alcohol Awareness Week. They aim to help correct misconceptions people have of alcohol use. They also hope to "educate the EMU community about the effects of alcohol and other substances on individuals and the community," said Steffen.

The SEC also aims to have student involvement and energy in the week’s activities. First-year Amanda Stauffer thinks that Alcohol Awareness Week is both beneficial and monotonous at the same time. "I think it's good to reinforce the possible dangers of alcohol, but, at least for me, the information has been drilled into us for years, so the content or time spent could be considered extreme."

A series of "drinking games" sponsored by the SEC in the dispensations center was a requirement for First-Year Experience classes in early October. The "games", though, made an impact on freshmen new to the college scene.

After experiencing the drinking games, first-year Miriam Yoder, said that the activity was, "an interesting time. It was a good way to learn about statistics and possible dangers." In an arrangement with the Peacebuilding Arts class, the students expressed feelings about drinking games.

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Foot in Mouth

"When I was growing up, where did I have to go to get pornography?"

Jerry Holspiegel
Pop Culture and Communication

Have a contribution? Send it to awane@emu.edu along with the professor’s name and class.