

City students can rest easily after plastic recycling efforts

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city elementary school's environmentally conscious students were rewarded for collecting the most plastic bags for a school population of its size in the form of a bench for the campus from the Trex Co. and a trophy from the Cape May County Municipal Utilities Authority (MUA).

During a gathering May 31 at Cape May City Elementary School, the city's Public Works Department Recycling Coordinator Pat D'Arco said the award was based on the amount of plastic bags collected by the students, keeping in mind the school's total student population.

Cape May City Elementary collected 476 pounds with an enrollment of 152 students.

The bench was made of Trex, a recycled plastic material often found on decks. The students also received a recycled plastic planter and were treated to a pizza party, according to D'Arco. Each student also received a "For Ocean" bracelet, which acknowledges that recycling plastic keeps it out of the water.

Linda Crumbock, county Municipal Utilities Authority

recycling coordinator, said about 3,400 students participated countywide. She is encouraging the public to return plastic bags to recycling containers inside grocery stores instead of throwing them away or placing them in recycling containers.

Cape May City Elementary School Superintendent Victoria Zelenak said students would take this lesson in recycling with them throughout their lives.

"It's just second nature to them now," she said. "That's why we're still collecting. It's ingrained in us now and we cannot throw that (plastic bag) in the garbage."

Crumbock said eight schools in the county participated in plastic bag recycling, collecting 1.5 tons of bags. The winning school based on total collections was Ocean City Intermediate School with 31.25 pounds collected in one month with 507 students enrolled.

The school that collected the most plastic bags based on enrollment was West Cape Elementary School, which collected 12 pounds of plastic bags with 84 students.

"It's on a per bag per student basis, so West Cape May came out higher with enrollment at 11.7 bags per



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Cape May City Elementary School students, along with school and city officials, accepted an award for recycling plastic bags that included a bench made by the Trex Co.

student where Ocean City was five bags per student based on their enrollment," Crumbock said.

Another initiative ran from Nov. 15, 2018, to April 15, 2019. Middle Township students collected 464 pounds from a student enrollment of 563.

Ocean City had 625 pounds collected with 507 students enrolled, she said. Wildwood High School and Middle School collected 118 pounds with an enrollment of 103 students, according to Crum-

bock. Maud Abrams School collected 286 pounds of plastic bags with 439 students. The Carl T. Mitnick School collected 179 pounds of bags from a student population of 454 students.

The David C. Douglass Memorial School rounded up 595 pounds of bags with 395 students.

"In total, if you take the weight of a plastic bag, 5.5 grams, 1.5 tons would equal 248,113 plastic bags collected," Crumbock said.

She said plastic bags when placed in a recycling container are considered contamination.

"The recycling program is to take them back to the stores because they do get recycled," Crumbock said. "Trex has agreements with Acmes and ShopRites throughout the country."

Cape May City Elementary School nurse Tiffany Bohn spearheaded the campaign at the school.

"At the end of the week, I would put all the plastic into

huge 30-gallon bags and I would stuff them into my car and take it to Acme," she said.

Bohn said the parents, students and staff are paying much more attention to plastic recycling. She said she sent a flier home with students stating "congratulations, we won, but you can keep participating," and just take it back to the supermarket.

Crumbock said the MUA receives far too many plastic bags in recycling cans. She said the MUA does not want plastic bags in the trash either.

"When you've got mounds of plastic bags that are thrown in there, the way that landfills operate is they need the water to get down that goes into the putrescible or food waste and clumps and clumps of plastic bags actually will divert water," she said.

Her message is simple: Don't put plastic bags in the trash or recycling, take them back to the store.

The city of Cape May is now collecting recyclables, no longer using a contracted hauler.

"We are not collecting recycling if it's in a plastic bag," D'Arco said. "It gets stickered, it gets left at the property."

Point considers uniform residential recycling cans

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — No one wants to see recycling items blowing around the neighborhood in stormy weather, least of all the borough.

At a May 28 Borough Commission work session, Commissioner Robert Mullock said when cardboard or newspapers become wet, they are no longer recyclable and are handled as trash. He noted the recycling containers most frequently utilized by residents are red or orange cans with lids that often blow away due to wind.

Stormy weather can also cause cans to tip over and spill their contents, Mullock said.

He said he discussed the matter with Public Works Director Bill Gibson, and rolled a container into the meeting room, a blue 48-gallon Toter.

"We are trying to get 50 percent of people's discards to be recycled," he said.

The Toter, which has wheels and a hinged lid, costs \$60 to \$70 but the borough could make a mass purchase that would lower the price to \$40 per container, Mullock said.

"It's made in America, it's

made of recycled plastic," he said.

Mullock said it can also be picked up by automated trash trucks, which could further reduce costs. He said the Toter is approved by Cape May Point's trash/recycling contractor.

The borough has \$9,000 in approved Clean Community grant funds that could be applied to purchasing the recycling containers, Mullock said.

He said he would refer the matter to the borough's Environmental Commission, which may also have some funding available.

He said grant money and

some borough funds could be used to purchase 300 containers over a two-year period. As an alternative, the borough could charge homeowners \$20 for the new recycling cans, Mullock said.

"If we did \$20, then we would be able to do the entire borough," he said.

Mullock said a sticker could be placed on the cans indicating what items should be recycled.

Deputy Mayor Anita van Heeswyk said she believed the \$9,000 grant was set aside to purchase an electric vehicle. She said the borough considered uniform recycling cans in the past and

some residents expressed fears the cans were too big to maneuver.

"I know they are actually easier than many other cans," she said.

Van Heeswyk said the cans could also be funded by a one-time assessment on tax bills.

"I think having everybody having one is really the way to go," she said.

Mullock said an ordinance could mandate using the borough-approved recycling can. If residents wished to have two of the containers, they could purchase a second can, van Heeswyk said.



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Shelf cloud

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brief spin-up tornadoes can

occur. Oftentimes, these tornadoes are rain-wrapped and short-lived, according to the

National Weather Service.

A shelf cloud will usually be associated with a solid

line of storms. The wind will come first with rain following behind it. It may appear to rotate on a horizontal axis.

Unlike the roll cloud, the shelf cloud is attached to the base of the parent cloud above it, usually a thunderstorm. Rising cloud motion often can be seen in the leading part of the shelf cloud, while the underside

often appears turbulent, boiling and wind-torn, according to the National Weather Service.

Gust fronts are characterized by a wind shift, temperature drop and gusty winds out ahead of a thunderstorm. Sometimes the winds push up air above them, forming a shelf cloud or detached roll cloud.

Trent Davis, a meteorologist with the National

Weather Service's Mount Holly office, said the three days of stormy weather were produced by a stationary front. He said a strong interact with the jet stream to the north of our area set us up for stronger uplifts in the atmosphere.

"The ridge to our south was pretty strong so that was leading to a southerly moist flow coming all the way up from the Gulf of Mexico," Davis said.

Severe-thunderstorm warnings were issued on all three days and a tornado watch May 29.

The forecast May 28 and 29 called for multiple waves of low pressure moving along a nearby frontal boundary bringing additional shower and thunderstorm chances.

Davis said a shelf cloud indicates strong outflow from a thunderstorm, often severe. Cooler water in the bay may have diminished the storms before they reached the southern half of Cape May County, he said.



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