



Growing Green



October 2013

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Leon County Office of Sustainability is to promote adoption of practices that improve our quality of life, protect our natural environment, and strengthen our economy, both within County government and within the community at large.

Message from the County Administrator



Our community is a great place to find inspiration for growing greener by learning from our neighbors and following suit. In this issue of the *Growing Green* newsletter, you'll read about a family whose concerted efforts enabled them to skip sending any waste to the landfill for an entire summer. Read on to find out how they accomplished this feat. As always, the County's commitment to sustainability includes a goal to serve as a resource for citizens wishing to put sustainability into action, and we are pleased that the County's Solid Waste Division could provide both inspiration and information to this family for their waste reduction efforts.

This issue of the *Growing Green* newsletter also brings you news about a host of sustainability happenings taking place in Leon County this fall. My particular favorite is the New Leaf Annual Farm Tour taking place October 19 and 20. I encourage you to bring the family out and enjoy the day with us.

Happy fall and I hope you enjoy this issue.

Sincerely,

Vincent S. Long
Leon County Administrator

Community Highlight: Family Tackles No-Waste Goal

The Wiley family, with parents Kim and Bobby, and daughters Gracie (10), Ava (age 8), and Sophie (7), are here to tell you that a goal of "zero waste" living is not pie in the sky. The busy family of five recently completed their second "No Waste Summer"—composting, reusing, or recycling the items that entered their household with rare exceptions. The family's commitment to a no-waste summer came with a goal of continuing to live full and normal lives filled with sleepovers, neighborhood get-togethers, and eating out, along with busy work days for Mom and Dad.



The family shared their tips for reducing landfill waste at the 2012 Leon County Sustainable Communities Summit. L to R: Gracie, Ava, Bobby, Sophie, Kim.

Ava sums up the experiment, "The best part is, it's kind of fun, and the worst part is we can't throw away stuff."

After learning a lot about reducing, recycling and reusing from field trips to the County's Solid Waste Division for the girls' class field trips and from community events, the family wondered how they could reduce the amount they sent to the landfill each week. In fact, they wondered if they could maintain a lifestyle of not contributing to the landfill at all. The Wileys became inspired to do their own part to make more sustainable living a reality.

"When the trash can is not there, you have to make a choice: Am I going to recycle, am I going to compost, am I going to save this to reuse?" – Kim Wiley

How Did They Do It?

After two summers' worth of experimentation, the family is happy to share what they learned. Kim Wiley identified their key strategies for success as:

- ▶ Setting up household systems that made it easier to find paths for used materials other than the trash can.
- ▶ Adjusting purchasing decisions to reduce the burden of dealing with troublesome packaging.
- ▶ Getting everyone on board to keep up the momentum.

The Recycling Station

One linchpin in the family's efforts is the "recycling station" set up in a kitchen cabinet. Shelves provide spaces for sorting and holding recyclable paper and cardboard, glass and plastic, Styrofoam, and plastic bags. While the first sets of items can be collected at weekly curbside pick-up, the Styrofoam and plastic bags must be taken to grocery stores for recycling.

The station also provides places to store specialty or hard-to-recycle items until they can be redirected for other uses. Some items become decorative or craft materials, such as glass wine bottles that edge the garden beds. Other items that are traditionally non-recyclable waste (such as drink pouches, chip bags, tooth brushes and more) are collected for drives held by the international recycling company TerraCycle, which gathers items in "great brigades" as a reuse market appears.



Parcels with postage-paid labels about to be mailed to Terracycle next to a container storing used items for the next "brigade."

What you won't find in the Wiley's kitchen is a trash can.

One week into the first no-waste summer, Kim Wiley took the drastic step of removing it, sealing the family's commitment to avoid tossing trash. "When the trash can is not there—you have to make a choice: Am I going to recycle, am I going to compost, am I going to save this to reuse?"

Compost Magic

Composting is the not-so-secret weapon in the family's no-waste system. In their backyard, the Wiley family composts food scraps (with the exception of meat or oil-based food items), coffee grounds, napkins, paper plates, waxed cartons, and even worn-out cotton clothing (which is also accepted at some thrift stores to be made into rags). After experimenting, the family removed

the kitchen compost pail to the porch, thus avoiding having fruit flies indoors. (Other avid composters avoid fly and odor problems by placing items in the freezer temporarily or by purchasing specially designed fly traps to place on the kitchen counter.) The Wileys add yard waste and fine mulch picked up for free at the County Solid Waste facility at 7550 Apalachee Parkway to supplement their "recycling in action" mixture.



Paper goods such as used napkins and cups, which aren't fit for recycling, decompose in a separate bin.



A two-stage composting system contains new materials at one end and more ripe compost at the other.

Conscious Buying

As their second summer experiment rolled around, the family took on lifestyle changes, especially to reduce packaging. "It's forced us to really make a conscious choice every time we buy something and every time we are finished with it," Kim Wiley explained.

The family now shops more at farmer's markets, where food comes with only rubber bands for packaging, and they are eating less meat because they can't compost meat or bones. Also, they began to shop more at thrift shops where the objects inside have already served one useful lifetime and where packaging is absent. The family loves shopping at The Collection at Southside for needed housewares and gifts for family and friends.

"We would have to be really conscious when we bought toys of how they were packaged," Kim Wiley says. Thrift stores provided one-of-a-kind gifts with no packaging. For on-line purchases, she began to ask about what shipping materials were used so as to avoid receiving packing peanuts that would have to be returned to a shipping store. Kim and Bobby now buy larger bags for staple items and reuse items such as the bag containing the cereal as well as the cereal box.

Another challenge was eating out. When possible, the family ate at places where they could be served on "real plates." Then there was what Kim Wiley calls, "the cup issue."

"If you go to restaurant, you get a cup of water, then maybe another drink, ending up with two cups that are thrown away. The waste of the cups was frustrating. . . It's a big challenge—getting drinks out is part of our culture, it's what you do." As a solution, the Wileys have supplied themselves with large, insulated reusable cups, which they carry into restaurants to avoid being served in single-use Styrofoam cups.

Getting Everyone On Board

Kim explains that the project had to have buy-in from all family members if it was to succeed. "Had everybody not been on board, we would not have been able to do it," she said. "As a family, we made a plan for the summer and stuck to it," she says.

Each of the past two summers, the family began their effort with a family trip to the learning center at the County Solid Waste facility, where they learned from County staff how and what to recycle. Then a trip to the library provided story books and reference books on how to reuse, compost, and recycle. To make it easier, everyone installed recycling bins in their rooms.

New Habits

Now that their summer experiment is over, Kim Wiley expects that the result will be a lasting reduction in how waste their household sends to the landfill. "The benefit of doing this in the summer is that there is an end. You have a good solid three months where you are not throwing things away. That's long enough to build behavior changes. We resumed use of a trash can again in September, but after 3 months, we acquired a habit of not throwing things away. For three months, we practiced how to recycle and reuse everything."



The Wiley women: Ava (in green), Mom Kim, Sophie, and Gracie. Kim holds a plastic cup typically received at a restaurant that ends up in the trash, while daughter Gracie holds a reusable insulated tumbler that can be used instead.

Quick Tips to Lowering Household Waste

- ▶ **Set up a recycling station** that offers an easy alternative to the trash can. Equipment is commercially available or create your own, making good use of ideas from Internet sources such as the crafting website Pinterest.
- ▶ **Establish a compost system.** From simple wire cages to pallet structures, options abound. Given time, all organic materials will decompose; for quicker results, blend a 50:50 ratio of fresh, wet organic waste "greens" with drier organic leafy waste. For more ideas, check out Video and Tutorial on making inexpensive composting systems by clicking here.
- ▶ **Look for re-use opportunities.** For example, glass jar lids can be attached to a shelf and the jars screwed in to hold nails, screws, and other hardware; used envelopes can serve double duty for making grocery lists, and cracked items can still be used as planters.
- ▶ **When in doubt, leave it out.** For example, a few greasy pizza



Sophie Wiley demonstrates compost before and after. The end result is a fine dark, crumbly, nutrient-rich product that nurtures the family's garden.

boxes can contaminate a whole load of paper and cardboard. Take all items containing hazardous waste - such as used CFL light bulbs; containers that held motor oil or chemicals; electronics, and batteries to the Hazardous Waste division at Leon County Solid Waste at 7550 Apalachee Parkway.

Or, bring hazardous items to a Collection Day at the Public Works Department located at 2280 Miccosukee Road. Monthly collection events are held on the first Saturday of each month, September through May, from 9:00 am until 1:00 pm for Leon County residents.

- ▶ **Check out the pamphlet**, "Where Do I Recycle This? A Guide for Odds and Ends" for information on where to take hard-to-recycle items, on our website, by clicking here or visiting www.growinggreen.org/docs/OddsEnds.pdf.
- ▶ Interested in joining a TerraCycle brigade? Check out what's being collected at www.terracycle.com/en-US/

NEWS

Single-Stream Recycling Begins

Recycling just got easier!

It is now OK to mix your recyclables together. Paper, plastic, containers, cardboard—as long as it is on the approved list, it can all be thrown together into one recycling cart. The new "single stream" recycling will be processed and sorted at Marpan Recycling after it has been picked up from your home. Once there, recyclable materials are sorted into large paper, plastic, and metal bales.



A new curbside recycling cart

Community Gardens Receive Awards

As part of the County's Community Garden Program, several gardens recently received \$1,000 grants! Congratulations to the following "Stakeholder" community gardens: Macon Community Garden, Greg McCray Boys & Girls Club Garden, the Sowing Seeds Sewing Comfort Sanctuary Garden, and the iGrow Dunn St Youth Farm.

While each garden varies in its emphasis, all of them directly provide fresh produce to the community, often in areas lacking access to healthy fresh foods. They also educate people about how to grow food, provide healthy activities for youth, and provide focal points for positive community activities.

Your community garden may qualify too. To learn more and access applications, visit the Growing Green website at www.GrowingGreen.org or contact Kathryn Ziewitz at (850) 606-5383 or ZiewitzK@LeonCountyFL.gov.



iGrow Dunn St Youth Farm

EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

October 17

Community Matters Topic: Trailhassee

Come learn about the many trails in our area and the one-stop online resource that can help you plan your outings at this quarter's "Community Matters: Topics of Interest for a Sustainable Community" program presented by Leon County. Gary Stogner of Leon County's Division of Tourism Development will guide us through the new mapping website that provides information about the County's trails for walking, cycling, boating, horseback riding, and motorsports. Cathy Briggs, former Recreation Manager for the Apalachicola National Forest, will provide tips for planning your outdoor adventure.

The program is being offered Thursday, October 17, at the Eastside Branch Library, 1583 Pedrick Road from 6:00 to 7:30 pm. Light refreshments will be provided. No advance registration is required.



Fall is a great time to get out and enjoy Leon County's many trails.

October 14 - November 18

Food and Diet: Gateways to Sustainability Course

Combine learning with eating in this Leon County Extension course about how good dietary choices can improve one's health and shrink one's ecological footprint at the same time. The six-week long class meets on Mondays from 5:00 to 8:30 pm. Each course begins with hands-on preparation of a meal that demonstrates various types of sustainable foods and diets, ranging from meatless to "paleo" to sustainable seafood. The fee is \$40, which includes meals. Register at: gateways-to-sustainability-leon2013.eventbrite.com.

October 16, 23, & 30

The New Economy

The Leon County Extension Service is offering a discussion course entitled, "The New Economy," about ways to participate locally in exchanges of goods and services - such as time and skill banks - that fall outside of the traditional economy. The course consists of lectures and readings online as well as classroom discussions. The six-week course meets on Wednesday evenings, from 5:30 to 7:45. The fee is \$15. Register at: new-economy-leon2013.eventbrite.com

October 19 & 20

New Leaf Farm Tour

Mark your calendar for the 6th Annual New Leaf Farm Tour. Take advantage of this once-a-year event. Forty-one farms are opening their doors and inviting you to come see local farms in action. Each farm is offering something special. Families can enjoy tours that include barnyard animals, fresh-baked goods and refreshments. You can attend a workshop on beekeeping, see community gardening in action, or talk to farmers who are committed to organic production.

Visit working cattle and goat ranches, a dairy or a winery. And of course, you can also purchase goods directly from the farm. Pick up a brochure at New Leaf Market Co-op for farm descriptions, maps, and suggested tours. You may also view the brochure online at www.newleafmarket.coop/seminars-events/farm-tour.

Leon County will have a compost demonstration at Turkey Hill Farm on Sunday afternoon, so stop by our exhibit to view half a dozen different composting alternatives to find which one might suit you best as you turn your kitchen scraps and yard materials from waste to nutrient-rich homemade soil.



Goats are among the residents at several area farms.

October 21

"Let's Get Growing" Workshop

What's involved in starting a community garden? Getting a successful community garden up and running requires organization and human skills, "green thumb" know-how, and funds for materials. Find out about all three areas and about how the Leon County Community Garden Program assists community gardens—including through mini-grants—at this free information session on Monday, October 21st, 6:00 pm, at the Leroy Collins Leon County Main Library, 200 W. Park Avenue. No advance registration is required. Presenters will be Trevor Hylton, Extension Community Gardening Specialist, Janis Piotrowski, Fort Braden Community Garden Manager, and Kathryn Ziewitz, Leon County Sustainability Program Coordinator. This event is part of "Seven Days of Local Delights" sponsored by the Red Hills Small Farm Alliance.

For more information, contact: Kathryn Ziewitz at (850) 606-5383 or by email at ZiewitzK@LeonCountyFL.gov.

Did You Know?

On a national average, a family of 4 spends \$1,600 a year on food that ends up, still edible, in the trash can. In Leon County, a 2011 study found that almost 14 % of the waste disposed at the curb was food waste, yard waste, and compostable paper. Almost another quarter of items sent to the landfill were recyclable papers, cardboard, plastic, and metals. Leon County spends more than half a million dollars a year just to handle yard waste. All this means when you compost kitchen scraps and yard waste you are saving taxpayer dollars and improving the environment.

Nature's Calendar

October and November

- ▶ Warbler and Monarch butterfly migrations peak in early October.
- ▶ Black bears are on the move, gathering food.
- ▶ Gray foxes begin mating.
- ▶ Flying squirrels will be raising their second litters and moving into pecan groves as the nuts ripen.
- ▶ Flatwoods salamanders breed with the first heavy rains of October.
- ▶ Sea turtles emerge from their nests and head for the ocean.
- ▶ Longleaf pines are setting seed.
- ▶ Northern songbirds arrive for the winter.
- ▶ Florida manatees begin heading south to warm water.
- ▶ Look for woodpeckers at your bird feeders.



Flying Squirrel



Monarch Butterfly

Saluting Our Interns

The Office of Sustainability wishes to thank interns **Mahesh Govindaraju** and **Kelli Thurson** for their work. Mr. Govindaraju is completing his Master of Public Administration at the Askew School of Public Administration at Florida State University. He is concentrating on our Green Fleet program. Ms. Thurson is completing her Master of Science in Urban and Regional Planning and has contributed substantially in producing this newsletter.



Mahesh Govindaraju



Kelli Thurson

A Note from the Leon County Sustainability Team

We hope you have enjoyed this issue. We welcome your feedback. In particular, if you have great ideas to share on how you reduce your solid waste, please share them with us. Also, if you have questions about composting or recycling, send them our way and we'll share representative contributions in our next issue.

Contact us at Sustainability@LeonCountyFL.gov. If you wish to be removed from our list, simply choose the "unsubscribe" tab at the bottom of the newsletter.

Best regards from Leon County's Sustainability Team,



Maggie Theriot
Director of Resource Stewardship



Kathryn Ziewitz
Sustainability Coordinator