

Preserving the environment through integrated recovery and disposal.

May 13, 2015

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jamie Tuttle, Recycling Coordinator at (315) 404-8230 or (315) 733-1224 ext. 2300

Oneida-Herkimer Solid Waste Authority Announces

Winners of the 5th Annual Zero Waste Lunch Challenge

The Oneida-Herkimer Solid Waste Authority sponsored its fifth annual Zero Waste Lunch Challenge for all public and private K-12 school buildings in Oneida and Herkimer Counties.

The purpose of the Zero Waste Lunch Challenge was to demonstrate how students can reduce the amount of waste they produce. Fifteen school buildings from Oneida and Herkimer Counties participated. In preparation for the Challenge, students were educated about ways to reduce the amount of lunch waste they produce and reviewed daily recycling guidelines through holding assemblies, classroom and cafeteria presentations, and informational displays throughout the schools. Although the Zero Waste Lunch Challenge was only based on one day, many schools are taking waste reduction efforts and implementing them daily, such as composting food waste and using silverware instead of plastic ware. The schools that participated reduced their cafeteria waste by over 50%, and some by over 75%. "It has been amazing to see the significant reduction in cafeteria waste that schools have achieved through their efforts," said Jamie Tuttle, Authority School Recycling Coordinator. "The Challenge was an opportunity to urge schools to instill daily changes for reducing waste as well as a lesson to teach students that if we all make a few small changes, we can have a significant impact," continued Tuttle.

The fifteen participating schools were:

1. Central Valley Academy – Central Valley School District
2. Frankfort-Schuyler Elementary School – Frankfort Schuyler Central School District
3. Gansevoort Elementary School – Rome City School District
4. Harts Hill Elementary School – Whitesboro Central School District
5. Holland Patent Middle School – Holland Patent Central School District
6. John F. Kennedy Middle School – Utica City School District
7. Jones Elementary School – Utica City School District
8. Marcy Elementary School – Whitesboro Central School District
9. N. A. Walbran Elementary School – Oriskany Central School District
10. Ridge Mills Elementary School – Rome City School District
11. Sauquoit Valley Elementary School – Sauquoit Valley Central School District
12. Sauquoit Valley Middle School – Sauquoit Valley Central School District
13. Sauquoit Valley High School – Sauquoit Valley Central School District
14. Staley Upper Elementary School – Rome City School District
15. Whitesboro Middle School – Whitesboro Central School District

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Neil C. Angell
Chairman

Harry A. Hertline
Treasurer

Alicia Dicks
James M. D'Onofrio

Barbara Freeman
Robert J. Roberts, III

William A. Rabbia
Executive Director

Kenneth A. Long
Vice Chairman

Vincent J. Bono

James A. Franco

James M. Williams

Jodi M. Tuttle
Authority Board Secretary

Preserving the environment through integrated recovery and disposal.

The elementary school with the lowest percentage of lunchtime waste per student on the day of the Challenge was Harts Hill Elementary School of the Whitesboro Central School District. The Authority will award Harts Hill Elementary School with the grand prize, which will be presentations from the Utica Zoo’s “Zoomobile.” During an average day at lunch, the school would produce approximately 110 pounds of lunchtime waste with approximately 350 students present (that equals almost 10 tons of garbage per school year). On the day of the Challenge, Harts Hill produced an astonishing 1.14 pounds of garbage during all of the lunch periods! There were 367 students in attendance. Beyond the obvious conservation of materials and landfill space, if this rate were sustained, the school would save over \$1,000.00 annually. “This is a perfect example of how students can make a huge difference with a few small actions, such as packing reusable and recyclable items in their lunches. I look forward to following up with schools in the weeks to come to see the lasting changes that were made through promoting waste reduction and awareness,” said Tuttle.

The middle school building with the lowest percentage of lunchtime waste per student was Sauquoit Valley Middle School. With 289 students in attendance, Sauquoit Valley Middle School produced only 1.75 pounds of cafeteria garbage! In addition to recycling paper, plastic, milk cartons, metal and glass, Sauquoit Valley Central School District also participates in the Authority’s food waste composting program. During the Zero Waste Lunch, students sorted their leftover food scraps for composting in the school’s composting unit. Once the food scraps are composted, the finished compost will be used for school gardening. Sauquoit Valley Middle School will be awarded the grand prize, which will be appearances from the KISS FM DJs for a live, remote radio broadcast.

In addition, both winning schools’ Green Teams will be awarded tours of the Authority’s Single Stream Recycling Center with transportation costs paid by the Authority.

With strong efforts from Harts Hill Elementary School’s Green Team Leader Erin Huggins, Sauquoit Valley Middle School’s Green Team Leaders Jennifer Zuroweste and Sara Call, the schools’ Student Green Teams, principals, student bodies, parents, custodians, and cafeteria staff, these schools have made significant impacts on the amount of cafeteria waste produced. Both schools continue to expand their recycling programs and students in both schools are reminded regularly of waste reducing strategies to use during lunchtime as well as in other aspects of daily life through various “green” initiatives.

The Authority would also like to acknowledge Sauquoit Valley Elementary School and Holland Patent Middle School for their outstanding efforts in this year’s Challenge. Thanks to the Green Team’s effort, enthusiasm and hard work, with 409 students, Sauquoit Valley Elementary produced just 1.41 pounds of garbage during their Zero Waste Lunch and Holland Patent Middle School produced only 2.8 pounds of garbage with over 324 students in attendance during the lunch periods.

For more information on the Authority’s School Recycling Program, contact Jamie Tuttle, School Recycling Coordinator, at (315) 733-1224 ext. 2300 or visit www.ourgreenteam.org to download the **School Recycling Program Guide**.

-End-

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Neil C. Angell
Chairman

Harry A. Hertline
Treasurer

Alicia Dicks
James M. D’Onofrio

Barbara Freeman
Robert J. Roberts, III

William A. Rabbia
Executive Director

Kenneth A. Long
Vice Chairman

Vincent J. Bono

James A. Franco

James M. Williams

Jodi M. Tuttle
Authority Board Secretary