

Eco-Note

A Newsletter for Early Childhood Professionals Winter 2009

Sent to you by the Kirksville Child Development Center with funding from
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On average, Americans produce 1 million extra tons of waste per week between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. Careful planning before and after the holidays can reduce the amount of related waste that ends up in the state's landfills, according to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. Preschoolers are at the perfect age to learn about recycling and taking care of our environment.

Following are some suggestions for doing this during the upcoming holiday season.



Reduce

- String popcorn to hang as holiday decorations. Later, hang the string outdoors for birds or squirrels to eat. This also offers a chance to observe the animals.

Reuse

Many recyclable items can be reused in projects, and the holiday season is no exception. Invite families to bring items such as paper towel tubes, juice and soda containers, and cardboard boxes to school. Kids can use these to create gifts for friends and family members. Talk with the kids about how we can reuse these items instead of throwing them away. They adopt a "habit of mind" and begin seeing their world differently, and this also fosters creativity!

- Invite families to bring in old Christmas wrapping and set up a gift wrapping center. Include scissors, tape, gift tags/labels, writing utensils, and old bows. Kids can create gifts to wrap for families and friends, or simply practice wrapping anything in the classroom, such as blocks of any size or boxes or maybe even a teacher!
- Create snowflakes with paper you would be throwing away or recycling. These can be hung on windows or from the ceiling or added to art projects.

- Ask families to bring old holiday cards to add to the creative art center. Include scissors, glue, popsicle sticks, and glitter. These can become gifts or ornaments or wall hangings. When these are sent home, include a letter to families with your own suggestions for using recyclable items for projects.
- Invite families to save product boxes from holiday gifts for using for projects. Kids can paint them, tape them together, ask a teacher to cut holes in them, climb in them, etc. The possibilities for boxes are endless!!

Recycle

- Recycle your Christmas tree/your families' Christmas trees. Cut the trunk into discs about 1-2 inches thick. They can be used for stacking and building, as they will offer uneven surfaces for experimenting with problem solving and physics. They have texture and scent that offer sensory experiences. The kids can count the rings and discuss how trees grow. And they are a tree native to Missouri, offering a connection to our local environment.
- Consider making a New Year's resolution to try using worms to compost food wastes or to compost your yard waste. Visit www.dnr.mo.gov for details about how to get started.

Why is this important?

The three R's – reduce, reuse, and recycle – all help to cut down on the amount of waste thrown away. They conserve natural resources, landfill space, and energy. Plus, the three R's save land and money communities must use to dispose of waste in landfills. Missouri has a goal of reducing the amount of waste going into landfills by 40 percent. Everyone can help meet this goal, and early childhood settings are no exception!

Ideas to pass along to your parents to decrease the amount of waste that goes to our Missouri landfills:

REDUCE

- Reduce waste by offering special food items or personal services such as gifts, for example, washing the car, baking cookies, or preparing a meal a week for someone who would appreciate the help.
- Buy gifts and products made of recycled materials.
- Buy rechargeable batteries to go with electronic toys. Visit www.rbc.org for information about recycling rechargeable batteries.
- Give environmentally friendly gifts to friends and family, for example, cloth napkins and tablecloths, cloth shopping bags, gift certificates, or recycling bins.
- Buy living gifts. Houseplants, garden seeds or potted trees can be transplanted in the spring.
- Buy high quality, durable goods to reduce waste. They will last longer and therefore decrease the amount of junk thrown away.

REUSE

- Reuse glass jars by creating homemade snow globes or filling them with cookie and cake mixes. Instructions are available on the internet.
- Reuse your Christmas tree by setting it outside as a shelter and feeding site for birds.
- Reuse good quality, nearly new items as gifts or donations to a secondhand store for others to purchase as gifts.
- Reuse holiday wrapping paper or use decorative tins to wrap gifts.

RECYCLE

- Recycle your Christmas tree. Kirksville offers a pickup service so the tree can become landscape mulch. Check www.kirksvillecity.com for more details.
- Purchase gifts made from recycled materials, such as welcome mats made of recycled tires; clothing or items made of recycled plastic bottles; crafts or projects made of scrapwood or reclaimed lumber.

REMINDER: Giving kids frequent experiences with nature is a necessary step in helping them care about the Earth. Kids must develop a relationship with the natural in their environments. Missouri weather can be a challenge in the winter, but try to go outdoors as much as possible. Encourage families to send appropriate clothing. Have several snow shovels for kids to use. Play active games to help them stay warm while getting needed fresh air. Bring nature indoors when going out isn't possible with activities such as bringing snow inside to color with food coloring and droppers or spray bottles, painting with ice cubes and tempera paint, or having a science experiment to see how ice melts.



Please contact the Kirksville Child Development Center at 660-665-0487 or at www.kirksvillecdc.org or contact the Missouri Department of Natural Resources at www.dnr.mo.gov for more information.