

Tennessee Pollution Prevention Partnership Success Story



Portland High School

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Recycling-Time For Change

The Member

Portland High School is a public high school in the northern region of Sumner County, Tennessee. The current student enrollment is 1,100 students. In the past, our school was limited to recycling newspaper only. A Sumner County School Board policy allowed only a newspaper recycling container on campus.

The Story

In 2007 students in the Transition Class decided to do a service project based on recovering and recycling aluminum cans, a valuable resource that was being lost in the trash at PHS. They created a program called "Cans for Christmas" to purchase gifts for a needy family. They started an awareness campaign with announcements, posters, and banners that encouraged everyone to properly recycle their cans and to bring cans from home to recycle at school. The success of the collection raised \$250, demonstrated our "Panther Spirit," and created a sustainable aluminum can recycling program that continues today.

Students continued their research on recycling and learned that 80% of a school's garbage can be recycled. Students knew that our school could be doing more, so they approached the Pupil Services Department of the Sumner County School System and asked them to donate recycling bins. Twenty recycling bins were donated and distributed throughout the halls of PHS. Students contacted all teachers within the building, supplied each classroom with a recycling box, and asked the entire school to recycle all their paper, plastic, cardboard, metal, and aluminum. Weekly announcements filled the school airways, and posters urging recycling decorated the hallways. Environmental Club and Transition Class students collected recyclables daily, and volunteers transported them to the city recycling bins a mile away.

While recycling became a hit within the walls of PHS, transporting the recyclables became increasingly difficult. Students felt they needed a large outdoor recycling bin and pick-up service on campus in order to recycle more efficiently. Mayor Kenneth Wilbur was contacted, and he agreed to donate the funds for a recycling bin and pick-up service.

Students soon learned that a school board policy prohibited recycling bins on any Sumner County School campus. Backed with determination, a genuine sense of urgency, and the support of their principal, students created a presentation and appeared in front of Superintendent Benny Bills and the School Board at a meeting to ask that the policy be overturned.



Transition Class and Benny Bills-Superintendent of Sumner Cty Schools, Glenn Gregory- Board Member, Ken Wilber-Mayor, and Sheila Groves-Custodian

The Success

In 2009 the school board agreed to overturn the policy and allowed placement of the recycling bin, setting precedence for the other 44 schools in Sumner County. Students were overjoyed with their victory! They then took their recycling message to 6 local schools and the community. They wrote a book, Recycling: The Retold Story, that was given to the schools along with an educational presentation. They created a television program for the local Portland channel, appeared on a local radio program, set up a booth at the Strawberry Festival, and marched in the Strawberry Parade, bringing their waste reduction message to the community.

The Pollution Prevented

Five hundred pounds of aluminum cans were recycled through the first "Cans for Christmas" drive. 20 indoor recycling bins for single-stream collection of paper, plastic, and cardboard are placed throughout the hallways of PHS, and 10 indoor bins are reserved for aluminum. Nearly 70 teachers keep individual recycling bins in their classrooms. 150 tons of recyclables were collected last year. Donation of a large outdoor recycling bin and weekly pick-up by QRS Recycling enabled Portland High School to increase recycling by leaps and bounds.

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Students on air at WQKR radio, promoting recycling and discussing their recycling projects. Dale Sprouse-former Assistant Principal of PHS, and radio host, Don Curry (not seen)