



Saint Louis County

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NEWS RELEASE

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Partnership between county and schools leads to increased recycling

This past school year has been filled with increased efforts by students and staff in St. Louis County to cut back on waste, and recycle more. These efforts mean students have the opportunity to conserve natural resources and minimize their impact on the environment while schools see the benefit of lighter trash volumes that are less expensive to haul.

Through a partnership between St. Louis County Environmental Services and Iron Range Youth in Action, Green Teams have been implementing or improving recycling programs in St. Louis County Schools. North Woods, Cherry and South Ridge Schools kicked off new recycling programs over the winter. Since then, North Woods has recycled nearly 2.5 tons of material while Cherry has recycled over 4.3 tons of material. Together, that's 13,680 pounds of natural resources like aluminum, paper and plastic that will be made into new products, rather than sitting in a landfill. Meanwhile, South Ridge's total trash volume for the year is about 19 percent less than last year's. Students at Northeast Range, who had already established their recycling program prior to this year, ramped up recycling efforts through a beverage container fundraiser that collected over 10,000 containers and earned the students \$1,000.

Schools in the area now have an opportunity to recycle new products that have been added to St. Louis County's recycling program: milk cartons and juice boxes. Hibbing public schools and Cherry School are the first schools in the county to recycle milk cartons. The process is simple: as students go to empty their trays after lunch, they empty their milk cartons and then place them in a recycling bin. These cartons are then recycled along with cans, bottles and other beverage containers.

After adding milk cartons to its recycling program, Washington Elementary in Hibbing has

seen a decrease of two large trash bags per day (360 bags per year) while Lincoln Elementary has seen a decrease of four large trash bags per day (720 bags per year). The Carton Council estimates that about one-third of a school cafeteria's waste by weight is liquid from beverage containers. Custodians at these schools have found their lunch waste to be much lighter, cleaner and easier to handle.

Mt. Iron-Buhl (MIB) High School put both recycling and reuse into action by organizing a locker clean out that collected recyclable or reusable items that typically get thrown in the trash as students hurriedly leave for the summer. MIB students collected 11 20-gallon bins of paper for recycling (an estimated 557 pounds). A huge amount of folders, binders, pencils and other supplies will be re-used for next school year, saving students and staff money and time spent on purchasing new school supplies. How much trash was created at this clean out? There wasn't a full trash can in sight, indicating that lockers are filled with items that don't need to go to waste!

For more tips on waste reduction and recycling at school, visit stlouiscountymn.gov/recycle and click on the School Recycling link.

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