

Going to School on Green Initiatives

By Colette M. Shalhoub, The College of New Jersey

While the concern for the environment is often thought of as a broad-based "macro" issue, college campuses throughout the U.S. have been proactively addressing it on a micro scale. As a student at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), I am proud to say that we are an environmentally conscious campus and have coordinated a plethora of events to address food and water waste, and energy and material conservation, as well as sustainability through awareness and proactive measures.

Environmental consciousness came to me as a freshman last year. Our tuition includes a computer usage fee that allocates a certain amount of printing paper per student. Called PrintSense, this paper quota reduces waste by nearly 50 percent or 2.5 million pieces of paper per year. That translates to saving 420 trees, 1,050 pounds of air pollution, 122,500 gallons of water, 71,785 kilowatt hours of electricity and 4,252 cubic feet of land fill annually!

College administration and students alike have been outspoken in their environmental concerns. One of the most active groups on campus is Water Watch. It is dedicated to improving the water quality in the Trenton area, while educating others about environmental concerns. Through service and activism, students can participate in stream walking every week on TCNJ campus, educate those from the surrounding community or help clean up Mercer County's rivers and waterways. Students can also be part of the larger national youth movement for clean, renewable energy sources and a healthy planet.

The most recent Water Watch activity was a campus-wide plastic water bottle collection during the month of October. The goal was to collect 5,000 used water bottles from the campus dormitories. These water bottles were then given to an art sculpture class to demonstrate their creativity, and the class didn't disappoint. An ecological exhibit was created and displayed in front of the student center just in time for TCNJ's Community Fest, appropriately themed "Going Green for Halloween." The sculpture captured people's attention and helped create awareness among the students and community of the enormous amount of waste that is generated each month. The whole event definitely made an impression on me and inspired me to do more for the environment both while I am a student and after I graduate.

While we are accountants not ecologists, as inhabitants of the Earth, we all can - and should - be good environmental stewards. Acts such as recycling ink cartridges or using compact fluorescent light bulbs are easy to do and can make a great difference at home, school and the workplace.

About the Author

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