Empowering Change for a Greener Tomorrow: Recycling Awareness through Art, Education & Clean Ups

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Project Motivation & Goals

The Urgency of Recycling
❖ Did you know that on a daily basis, we produce over 5 pounds of solid waste, but only ~1 pound of that gets recycled? The remaining four pounds end up in landfills (CT DEEP 2023).
❖ Recycling is an often-overlooked issue that contributes to climate change (EPA 2023). Recycling is crucial as it not only benefits the environment but also enhances our daily lives (EPA 2023):
  - Environmental Preservation
  - Resource Conservation
  - Energy Efficiency
  - Climate Change Mitigation

Recycling Awareness via Art

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- Resource Conservation
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Goal: While I knew I wanted to focus my project on this critical issue of recycling, the design of my project was community-informed during my first tabling event at the Hartford Public Library, individuals expressed: “I simply don’t have the time to recycle and don’t know where to recycle”

My goal is to increase recycling awareness through targeted messaging that resonates with people of all ages by creating/organizing and implementing the following:

- Tabling and Workshops on awareness of recycling benefits and how to recycle,
- Art installation to communicate what can and can’t be recycled to a broader audience in my community,
- Clean Up to promote coming together as a community to collect trash and recyclables in a Hartford neighborhood.

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Community Awareness via Education Workshops

Tabling Event @ Hartford Public Library (Oct 2023)
❖ Collaboration with Nana Adjie of City of Hartford Public Works
❖ Purpose: Spread awareness about recycling.
❖ Activities: Gave out brochures on recycling in both English and Spanish, while also giving recycled toys to children.
❖ Impact/Outcome: Became aware about the limited knowledge the public knew about recycling. Even though about 5 people came to my table it was enough for me to realize everything starts with educating the public.

Adult Recycling Workshop @ Hispanic Wellness Center (Feb 2024)
❖ Collaboration with Dr. Mayra Rodriguez of UConn Extension.
❖ Purpose: To provide recycling education for adults.
❖ Activities: I gave a presentation on recycling to adults and continued with a BINGO game about recycling to test knowledge.
❖ Impact/Outcome: Provided flyers in Spanish/English on recycling to 18 adults.

Youth Recycling Workshop @ Hispanic Wellness Center (Dec 2023)
❖ Collaboration with Dr. Mayra Rodriguez of UConn Extension.
❖ Purpose: To educate children on what can be recycled, composted or thrown away and assess their understanding.
❖ Activities: Children were provided with a sheet with recycled & non-recycled materials. They colored, cut it out, and decided whether its recyclable or not.
❖ Impact/Outcome: Eight (8) children, ages 4-17 participated. Depending on age, many knew what categories to place items. By teaching children responsible recycling habits early on, this can have a positive change early on in their communities, creating a cleaner and healthier earth.

Organizing a Clean Up Event

❖ Organizing a community clean-up event is one way to foster connections that will encourage sustainable habits, like recycling, and reduce pollution in our community.
❖ With the support of the Hartford Fire Department and Nana, I will coordinate a clean-up event in Hartford to unite our community and demonstrate care for our environment.
❖ Clean up will happen on these streets on May 2024:
  - Babcock
  - Eliot
  - West End

Future community events and services may target younger audiences and include activities such as:
- Upcycle workshops
- Local park cleanups

Conclusion and Next Steps

Transferring from recycling to upcycling and from learning to teaching has had a profound effect on me and everyone involved in the journey. Even though we are only at the beginning stages, my knowledge has expanded significantly and I'm ready to help others see recycling doesn’t have to be a chore it can be fun as well.

By July 2024, I'm hoping to make a bigger impact by:
❖ More community events and clean ups
❖ Place a few recycling bins in local areas
❖ Provide more upcycle workshops
❖ Local park cleanups

References

- "UConn NRCA". 2024. "Providing a clean-up event in Hartford." Hartford Public Works Department.
- "West End". 2024. "Providing a clean-up event in Hartford." Hartford Public Works Department.

"I don't have time to recycle"

"I notice more homeless individuals in Hartford are the ones recycling more than anyone else"

References

- Awesome Custom Wholesale Reusable Grocery Bags Bulk
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