

Move-out Madness

Material Exchange

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Introduction:

This is the Move-Out Madness project, an event directed toward both students on campus and the Bellingham community. It is a chance for people to come and exchange their items in order to keep renewable materials out of the landfill, and redirect them into the hands of other potential owners or to be recycled. This idea was created with the hope to show people how to recycle in a new, sustainable, and exciting way. Events such as these provide people with the opportunity to recycle unwanted items or take home new ones, take on a leadership role as Western students in our community, and make an effort to keep Bellingham a healthy and environmentally clean city. This type of project portrays a unique way to try and help people realize that even if their unwanted items are no longer needed, they can easily be circulated back to the community or recycled without being thrown in the trash.

1.1 Purpose behind the project:

The purpose behind this project is both to help Bellingham community members understand that by reusing old items, we are doing our part in helping keep our environment free of litter, and that Bellingham is a clean and eco-friendly community. We are doing this to help people get rid of items and to give them the opportunity to find ones while keeping the items out of the landfill. The ultimate goal we are working towards is to make Western Washington University, a zero-waste community.

1.2 What is Move-Out Madness?

Move-out madness is a materials exchange event that we are hosting on June 12, 2011, the Sunday following WWU's finals week. Students are to bring any unwanted household items on the day of the event (9am-3pm) including but not limited to:

- lamps
- movies

- CDs/LCDs
- bed sheets/linens
- shoes
- Winter gear (gloves, toques, etc.)
- computers and accessories
- kitchen utilities and supplies (no chemicals please)
- art supplies
- roller blades
- books of all sorts
- clothing
- non-perishable food
- binders
- school accessories
- small household appliances
- toaster ovens
- games (board + computer)
- sound systems/radios/stereos
- Uniforms (work, cadets, etc.)
- sports equipment

The Move out Madness team has worked closely with the Recycle Center and utilizes several of their handy resources. During finals week, the Recycle Center hosts a “Recovery Drive” and places large blue barrels in all of the dormitories in which students can place all of their unwanted items. The Recycle Center and other volunteers later sort through the material – deciding which items are worthy enough to take to the Move Out Madness event and which ones will move on to be recycled. Members of the Recycle Center were present at several of our team meetings to help coordinate the event.

This year (spring, 2011), we decided to limit the event to students only for dropping off items. However, community members are still welcome to attend and take home anything they please. We had a hard time trying to gauge the exact quantity of items we would be receiving (although we will include this in our final report) and made this decision unanimously among team members. Depending on the results, we will either continue or forego this decision.

The event will be held on the upper Fairhaven Intermural Field next to the “C” parking lots. Our “Plan B” is the Sehome High School covered area if it is raining on the day of the event. The Fairhaven field was proven the best location due to the availability of restrooms (on the Softball field), parking (“C” lots), and a large enough space for people, tables & chairs (rented from Transport Services), tents (provided and set up by Western’s Viking Union) and materials.

Upon entry for students dropping off materials, we (as in the Move out Madness team and all other volunteers) will quickly sort through the items and decide which ones are allowed to enter the exchange area and which ones we unfortunately cannot use. We do not have a dumpster available on the day of the event, which could be reconsidered for future works. However, the items that are left over will be picked up by the Salvation Army on the Monday following the event (they do not do pickups on the weekends).

The results of the event will be submitted under section 7.0 Event Evaluation after the event takes place.

1.3 Significance to WWU:

The significance of the project for WWU is that it creates a time and place for all students to participate in recycling, reusing or sustainably disposing of unwanted items. They are faced with the opportunity to learn that there are a number of ways to recycle, with this being one of those ways. It also shows that Bellingham is home to an eco-friendly college that is committed to their goal of a “Zero Waste WWU!” This idea was created by the Office of Sustainability and Facilities Management and involves the commitment to eliminating all recyclable and compostable waste from the WWU waste stream. Essentially, through education, operational changes and peer education, WWU will become a “zero waste” institution. Move out Madness is an avid supporter and contribution to achieving this goal.

2.0 Methodology

Planning an event such as this is never an easy task; it requires the coordination and cooperation between various groups and enterprises on campus and in the community. The most important part of our methodology was communicating and networking efficiently between all of the necessary parties involved. This also required that we find the correct people to contact to provide us with approvals or to assist us with the coordination of the event. The research we did involve figuring out the most efficient way to conduct the event with advertising, organizing and receiving approval for the event. We did this by contacting the appropriate institutions within our own university and by utilizing information provided by other universities or groups who had hosted similar events (refer to case studies).

We often found ourselves running into several “dead ends” when trying to contact the correct groups for certain information and resources. Essentially, it is often difficult to contact the correct person for what you are looking for on your first attempt. “A day in the life of a Move out Madness team member” often meant being let down, extremely frustrated, or disappointed. This project was extremely surreal – for this one in particular included hosting an *actual* event and having to face, in reality, the daily struggle of trying to contact resources who are often too busy, have no interest, or simply cannot help you. In these cases, we were forced to move forward, and fish for more resources – for almost *every* task in the coordination of

our event involved going to a completely separate sources. It takes commitment, patience, respect and understanding to make a project such as this a success – which our team inevitably learned how to do.

2.1 Internet Research

Most of the online research we did was through Association for the Advancement Sustainability in Higher Education. This included conducting case studies of other universities through interviews or online research and deciding which aspects of their projects we wanted to either incorporate or leave out of our project. We also researched through Google. From our Google research we found out about the further developments that had resulted from doing campus garage sale events. Some included large press coverage such as Time Magazine and television networks. Another girl started a non-profit group called Dump and Run as a result of her first campus garage sale.

2.2 Contacts & Meetings

Our numerous contacts followed loosely this chronological order:

- **Sang Nyugen, Office of Sustainability**
Email: sang.nguyen@wwu.edu Phone: 360.650.4924
- **Julia McLean, The AS Recycle Center and President of Air and Waste Management**
Email: mcleanj2@students.wwu.edu
- **Audrey Andersen, WWU Recreation Center Program Manager**
Email: Audrey.andersen@wwu.edu Phone: 360.650.4310
- **Laura O-Quin, Graphic Designer for the Office of Sustainability. Email:**
lauraquin@mac.com
- **Susanna Sullivan, Safety Officer II, Environmental Health and Safety**
Email: Sue.Sullivan@wwu.edu Phone: 360-650-6582
- **Bellingham Salvation Army**
- **Facilities Management**

- **Musicians from the Bellingham community**
- **ResLife Echo-Reps – volunteers and notification of the event**

2.3 Program Development

The development and success of an event such as this requires splitting up tasks between associated team members, acquiring patience and persistence, utilizing your networking own skills, and meeting weekly with coordinators to collaborate ideas, set tasks, and evaluate the progress of the event. For us, the development started out slow and disappointing – but with the approval and accomplishments of the “big tasks,” the ball really seemed to move quickly from there.

We focused first on date, time and location of the event. Setting a date for the event was not as easy as we thought it would be – we initially wanted the event to be held on the Saturday following finals week, but were quickly informed that the day of WWU graduation would make parking for our event unavailable. Then there came the issues of dorm residents – they are forced to move out of the dormitories completely by the Saturday following finals week, which doesn’t give them much of a chance to bring their items to or even attend the event. This is when we decided that the Recovery Drive hosted by the Recycle Center would be a good way to tackle the dorm issue and still be able to utilize some of their unwanted goods. Therefore, we decided the Sunday following finals week was the best day for the event to take place.

Location for the event was also a struggle to finalize – having bathrooms and available electricity would be ideal for an event such as this, however, finding available space with both of these sources is very difficult. Once we decided that the upper Fairhaven Intermural Field was the best location (even though electricity would not be available), we had to go through Audrey Andersen from the WWU Recreation Center to reserve the space. Areas of concern included rain on the day of the event, trampling and trashing of the field, and a soggy surface. Therefore, in case of the event of rain, we reserved a covered space at Sehome High School where the event will be held instead.

After large tasks such as these were finalized, the development from here involved deciding how the event would be run, what kind of entertainment services would be provided, and what to do with the leftover items. We originally conceived that this event would be more like a festival than a garage sale. However, the short amount of time we had for planning and the availability of necessary materials prohibited this. We had wanted the musicians to play on a stage through a PA system but these materials were unavailable, so instead we are having them play acoustically.

We had also wanted to have food vendors at the event, but that was one of our last priorities, eventually eliminating it from our “to-do” list. Hopefully these things we could not accomplish could be included in the future with better planning and earlier coordination with the various parties.

2.4 Advertising

Our various forms of advertisement included:

Newspapers:

We sent press releases to most of the newspaper publication in Whatcom County: Bellingham Herald, Cascadia Weekly, Western Front, The Northern Light, the Ferndale Record, and Bellingham Business Journal.

Fliers:

We had 150 fliers made. 50 of them were distributed to Western's publication services to disperse around campus. 50 of them will be put on bulletin boards and signs in the greater Bellingham community. The rest will be placed in the major student rental neighborhoods.

Facebook page:

We made a Facebook page with the graphics from our flier. We have used Facebook to recruit volunteers and invite people to the event. Over 200 people have said that they are attending the event.

Radio:

We are having KUGS, Western's Radio Station; put an advertisement out about the event on their radio show.

Churches:

We also have sent a pdf version of our flier to the five biggest churches in Bellingham to notify them of the event.

3.0 Case Studies

3.1 Case Study #1: University of Guelph

One institution that has made created an outstanding dedication to reducing waste and enhancing environmental and social sustainability is the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada. The move out program at the university has set up a longstanding project that assists students in getting rid of unwanted food, clothing, household and bulky items as they move out of their residence to drastically reduce the amount of waste from entering the landfill. The university has created an extremely impressive website for the project that provides the projects history of success, volunteer registration forms, forms to register your bulky items to be picked up, and several statistics documenting volunteer hours and the amount of items collected. Since the project has become so successful at this particular university,

such insights to the project itself and the great support from its community members will assist our project to head in a similar direction.

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/~moveout/>

3.2 Case Study #2: George Washington University

George Washington University has had an ongoing campus wide garage sale that is a huge success for several years now. Each year they save 1000's of pounds of items from going in the dump. Their sale is over the span of 2 days, has hundreds of volunteers and thousands of people attend the event. A project of this size could be a goal that Western could aim for 10 years down the line. It would require at least 5 to 10 years of extensive planning, coordinating an event of this magnitude. This event has been such a success that Time Magazine ran an article on it and they had multiple TV networks there to cover the event.

3.3 Case Study #3: Utah State University

This university had a group called Annie's Recyclers and they did several large projects over the year in 2008. Three events were included: "Reduce, Reuse, Rock" concert, a soup swap where people brought items and swapped them and gave everyone a bowl of soup, and the last was a large material exchange in the main street of the city and saved and donated a large amount of items to local charities. It was a huge success and they have done it for the last three years now.

3.4 Case Study #4: University of Kansas

The Environmental Stewardship Program at the University of Kansas provides a removal service for reusable furniture and office supplies in agreement with the KU Surplus Property Recycling Procedure. The program is called the Surplus Property Recycling, which involves working with campus departments and residence halls to collect unwanted items and equipment. They do charge \$23 an hour per person for a delivery fee in addition to the material charge. Campus Departments can choose to pick up items themselves at no charge. The first step is to redistribute them back to the campus, as campus departments have a priority. Then after surplus items have been stored for 2 weeks and the campus has had a chance to look over it, it will be available for donation to non-profit charitable organizations that have been approved by the Kansas University Property Accounting Services Department. Lastly the Environmental Stewardship Program cannot directly sell items to the public; they can however use an auction for the public to bid on items via online. They use an auction service called Purple Wave that allows users to bid on items, live online. Users can view the university's inventory which changes weekly. The purpose of this program is to encourage the sustainable thinking of reduce, reuse, and recycle!

3.5 Interview with Suzanne Savanick Hansen, Director of the Office of Sustainability at Macalester College.

Professor Hansen was kind enough to give us a lengthy telephone interview about their move-out event. They have been hosting an event similar to ours for the past 7 years. Each year they receive more items and donations than the last. Last year in 2010, they received enough items to fill up an entire ballroom with goods and they raised a record number of donations \$8000. The money is donated to various charities of the volunteers' choosing. Her one warning to us was that we are going to receive more items than we think and to be prepared for that. Macalester College only has 2000 students where Western has 14,000. We could easily receive more items than they currently do.

4.0 Research & Analysis:

Surely, organizations such as the AS Recycle Center do a tremendous job in keeping some of our junk out of the landfill and instead being recycled. Every day, the AS Recycle Center collects about 3,800 pounds of recyclables from Western's campus and greatly helps reduce the university's impact on the environment. However, our program, coupled with the recycling center, can help return items back into the hands of other potential users for their benefit, instead of instantly being recycled. Also, bulkier items that the recycling center may not be able to take can be included and accepted in our program.

In order for the program to ultimately be successful, it is very important that we advertise for our event and provide some sort of incentive for students and community members to participate. This is why we plan to involve activities, music and maybe even food with our event in order to generate enough items and people for the event to run. Having near-by restrooms available, electricity, tables, tents and fencing are other favorable or perhaps essential items needed for the success of the program.

In addition to this, it is important to begin collecting data and statistics for future groups to take over the project and enhance it even further, or for potential stakeholders and community members to have an incentive to contribute. Statistics such as pounds of food collected, bags of clothing collected, number of bulky and household items collected, levels of recycling and garbage left after the event, and number of volunteers and volunteer hours needed should be recorded. This information will be recorded and added to this report after the event takes place.

Hopefully characteristics such as these will generate recognizable results for the program to remain a part of the university's contribution to environmental sustainability and only grow further from what we have made of it.

5.0 Conclusions

The goal for our project is to create a fun, easy way for students and community members to either get rid of their unwanted household clothing, food and furniture items, or receive new ones in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way. Not only will people be looking at the advantage of cutting back on waste, but also the avoidance of costly alternatives such as paying for their waste to enter the landfill. As students at Western, and with the documentation of this report, we have access to the resources needed to make this project happen and for the bar to be raised each year in helping create *measurable* social and environmental sustainability in our community through an annual local “Move-Out Madness” type of event.

6.0 Future Works:

There is definitely room for this project to grow and blossom into something that Western could use to bring together the community and impart a renewed outlook on recycling items. After talking and working with the Recycle Center, we hope that in the following years we can partner up with them to create a week long recovery drive and then at the end of the week showcasing all the items we have collected. Essentially, that is what we ended up doing this year but we would like to make it a more cohesive relationship that we plan to work with each other every time. We would want to make it one event, instead of two separate events.

After reviewing numerous programs, such as the University of Kansas, we realize that the bar has been set high. Starting several recycling and sustainability programs such as these other universities, Western could once again become a leader in university recycling and waste reduction. Future works could include doing this type of material exchange twice a year. One at the beginning of the school year in September when people are moving back into the dorms, apartments and houses and are need of items and are throwing out stuff that does not fit or they do not need any more. Keeping in mind that people move throughout the year and students graduate and move every quarter, Western could also have a constant storage/pick-up location throughout the year. The money to rent such a space could make this idea unfeasible but students could post it to an online storage forum similar to craigslist but it would be through Western. There are many ideas that could stem from this move-out project, it is just a matter of how committed students are to expanding it and taking off were we left. Hopefully we will leave enough research and detailed instructions of how we completed our project so that the next team can do something bigger and entirely new, building off what we have completed this year.

7.0 Event Evaluation: **Results from Move-Out Madness 2011 to be announced.**