

University

Group educates teachers to teach green

by Bridget Monaghan

Sixty million plastic water bottles are thrown away each day in the United States, and most end up in landfills or incinerators, according to the Container Recycling Institute, a non-profit organization that promotes and studies the recycling of beverage containers.

Last December, a newly-organized student group began protesting Penn State's contribution to that figure.

The group is called 3E-COE for ecology, environment and education and College of Education, according to organizer Peter Buckland, a graduate student in education theory and policy.

The organization is interested in developing initiatives or programs focused on sustainability, ecological literacy and awareness that can be integrated into present and future classrooms.

The group juggles political issues, Buckland said, but is set apart from Progressive Student Alliance and Eco-Action because it has a more narrow focus on the particular subset of education. "The United States is the most educated country," he said. "The most educated people are the most wasteful people, and some-

thing has to be done about that."

Buckland estimated 30 people, including undergraduate students, graduate students, professors and administrators are involved in the group.

Alexandra D'Urso, a graduate student in the College of Education, said she joined the organization to get involved in making changes.

"I've been a proponent for environmental conservation, and I've been waiting for the right opportunity to put my money where my mouth is," she said.

The December protest with the Progressive Student Alliance and Eco-Action was to demand that Penn State eliminate disposable plastic water bottles on campus.

Buckland said the group wrote a letter to Penn State President Graham Spanier, who offered to have administrators meet with the group. Penn State has a goal of zero waste on campus, Buckland said.

That resulted in a January meeting that left Buckland optimistic. He said employees handling the waste for the university see any waste reduction as potentially good, and unnecessary waste — plastic water bottles — as good to eliminate.

"The meeting was productive, thoughtful,



Photo by Herve Nicoloff

Last December 3E-COE protested Penn State's continued use of disposable plastic water bottles.

and I think that one way or another we are going to see something change in the coming year — their elimination wholesale or a move to a biodegradable bottle," he said.

"People are taking a free resource and making it extremely expensive, but it's real-

ly easy to not think about because it's so convenient," Buckland said. "It's going to become an inconvenience one day."

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New mentoring program fosters inclusion

by Ivana Lee

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) and Community Diversity Group (CDG) of Centre County have created a mentoring program, allowing women of all ethnicities to become part of the broader community.

The AAUW/CDG mentoring program was created to enhance the inclusion of local women from underrepresented groups in Centre County by connecting them with others who can provide friendship and advice on a variety of issues, including networking, career planning and community involvement.

"It's not just about finding jobs, building women's confidence and self-esteem," Dr. Denise Hinds-Zaami, diversity advocate and counselor at Penn State University, said. "But it's to know you're not closed out."

Hinds-Zaami came to State College four

years ago from New York. Arriving in the new community, Hinds-Zaami was exposed to a different culture, and simple needs were hard to find.

"I didn't know where the shoe repair shop was," Hinds-Zaami said. "One woman came to State College and lost all her luggage and didn't know what to do. She didn't know where to buy her ethnic food.

"Having someone to help you find a shoe repair shop, or where to get your hair done, or finding your luggage is what the mentoring program can offer," Hinds-Zaami said.

The mentoring program started last January with four women who graduated from the program Jan. 31, 2009 at the Schlow Centre Region Library.

Pat Kephart, diversity chair of AAUW, encourages women to join the mentoring program because it is a great way to network and be involved in the community.

Carol Eicher, chair of CDG, said the mentoring program allows people to con-

nect within the community, make personal and social connections and become comfortable.

AAUW is one of the oldest women's organizations, founded in 1881 by a small group of women to help women realize that there are a number of issues they face once they have a degree, like pay equity and education funding.

CDG was founded in 2001 by Eicher with a minority woman, after discovering several organizations and businesses were concerned about recruiting minority staff members.

"When minority staff became employees they wouldn't stay very long. They didn't feel comfortable in our community," said Eicher. "There were no social connections, and simple things, like finding beauty products or ethnic food, was a concern, so we formed a group."

AAUW and CDG in a partnership to organize a mentoring program for local

women with different backgrounds is a way to keep the organization's mission statement alive, and to provide a program for women of different cultures, backgrounds, and races.

"It's not how to only survive, but to enjoy the community with others," said Hinds-Zaami.

For more information

The CDG Web site is www.communitydiversitygroup.com and the AAUW Web site is www.aauwstatecollege.org. Eicher can be reached at ece2@psu.edu, Kephart at pbk1@comcast.net and Hinds-Zaami at dxh45@psu.edu.

Students aim to clear-cut Kimberly-Clark products

by Maggie O'Keefe

Penn State's contract with toilet paper supplier Kimberly-Clark expires in June and members of the student group Eco-Action are encouraging the university to purchase from a different, more sustainable company.

"We don't want Penn State to be a part of something so destructive," said Tina Robinson, spokeswoman for Eco-Action.

Eco-Action members said that they care more about how the janitorial paper products are made than the end-product quality.

"A lot of kids want to know where their toilet paper comes from, and they get really disturbed about it when they hear it comes from clear-cutting," Robinson explains. "We just want to get the information out there."

Eco-Action is a university funded environmental group whose goal is to bring Penn State up to environmental sustainability standards through diverse campaigns.

The organization's current project is with the Kleercut campaign launched by Greenpeace in 2004 against the largest janitorial paper company, Kimberly-Clark.

Eco-Action wants the Office of the Physical Plant committee at Penn State to sign with a more eco-friendly paper company.

"They [OPP] understand they need to take sustainability into account," said Jane Dahms, a member of the group. "We have trust that they will."

In January, four Penn State MBA graduate students gave a presentation to OPP, Kimberly-Clark representatives, Eco-Action members, Greenpeace representatives and others about increasing the standards of their recycled paper product companies.

"It was an important day for our campaign," said Robinson after the meeting.

One presenter explained that Kimberly-Clark would not meet the proposed sustainability standards because the company uses ancient forests, it has a low percentage of recycled content in its paper, and it clear-cuts trees without Forest Stewardship Council certification.

According to Kleercut's Web site, 19 percent of Kimberly-Clark products are recycled, a low percentage compared to other companies like Atlas Paper Mills, LLC,

"A lot of kids want to know where their toilet paper comes from, and they get really disturbed when they hear it comes from clear-cutting."

-- Tina Robinson

which uses 100 percent recycled fiber.

Kimberly-Clark seems to be proud of this fact according to one of its statements.

"KLEENEX Facial Tissue is made from 100 per cent virgin fibre and contains no recycled fibre," said Kimberly-Clark on its Web site, implying recycled products are of lower quality.

For Eco-Action, the clear-cutting of ancient boreal forests is a main concern.

"The boreal forest in Canada is one of the greatest resources protecting us from global warming and clear-cutting these forests is making it a lot easier to release carbon into the atmosphere," Robinson explained. "It's a very unique habitat, the second largest, most diverse land habitat after the rainfor-

est."

The campaign was launched on the Penn State campus last January when Dahms returned from working with Greenpeace knowing that Penn State's five-year contract with Kimberly-Clark was soon to expire.

The organization has been reaching out to the campus and surrounding community with petitions and demonstrations.

Its efforts paid off when OPP announced at the January meeting that they liked the MBA proposed/Eco-Action affiliated score-card of paper company standards.

"It's something we can manage and something that is not subjective," said one OPP representative. "I think we are meeting our goal, I like this, I like this very much."

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from 3E-COE, pg. 16

D'Urso said that since she joined 3E-COE she has learned that Penn State is making many efforts to change.

"I'm excited the university is willing to talk to us," she said. "I think that says a lot about our school."

3E-COE is also planning to create a teachers' garden for the College of Education, Buckland said. He said members hope to teach people how to grow their own food to benefit the ecosystem. "So much of our food is hidden from us and production makes food into a convenience all of the time," he said.

Buckland said more gardens are popping up in schools all over the United States,

even in local elementary schools, and feedback has been positive from students, teachers and parents. Students are not being properly educated about food because food in schools is all processed, he said.

"How a carrot becomes a carrot is totally alien to some people and there are people who have never eaten a fresh peach even though we have a farmers' market down the street," Buckland said. "A garden is a way of bringing people back to food."

The teachers' garden will also help implement new teaching methods in schools, Buckland said. He said using a sweet potato, for example, could create lessons about indigenous people, history and migration.

"It is imperative that we refashion the way people think about nature," he said.

D'Urso said one of her personal goals for

the garden is convincing College of Education staff members to be involved.

"Students come and go, but we need individual long-term members to keep this going over time," she said. "One of the side goals is to foster a sense of community and engage all members of it."

Issues such as Penn State's utilities caps with Allegheny Power raising tuition prices will also foster new initiatives for 3E-COE. Buckland said he would like to collaborate with faculty to create a teaching component for freshman seminars or for the entire university to learn about conserving energy.

D'Urso said in her current freshman seminar classes, her students are required to write a paper on paper that has already been used. She said she hopes this organization will help educate students and help them

create ideas to take into their own classrooms.

"We talk about what our responsibilities are as a community," she said. "A small gesture still makes a difference."

Other universities are also jumping on the bandwagon of creating organizations focused on sustainability, but Buckland said his biggest vision for the group would be to develop into an organization similar to the Piedmont Project at Emory University in Atlanta, Ga. He said he would like to see a university-wide coalition having one integrated goal of reducing, reusing and recycling.

"Maybe this is the chance for us to do something to become a more sustainable college," he said. "There is room for a group like ours to create lessons on how to be more mindful of energy use."

USAS activist wary of PSU's sweatshop maneuver

by Tamara Conrad

Penn State has joined a program with Knights Apparel to improve the conditions of workers of collegiate clothing manufacturers, but members of Penn State's United Students Against Sweatshops say more should be done to make a significant change.

The "Bookstore" program with Knights Apparel will benefit 100 to 200 workers at one factory in the Dominican Republic, according to Megan Quinn, a member of USAS. In addition to better working conditions, the program will also enhance wages and benefits, according to a statement issued by Penn State.

Although Quinn agrees that the program will benefit the workers of this particular factory, it doesn't affect workers at the remaining 4,000 to 5,000 collegiate apparel factories.

"It's a great first step, but ultimately, it's not enough," said Quinn.

Penn State's participation in this program is a positive first step, Quinn said, especial-

ly since the university has been refusing to act on sweatshop issues for years.

The program makes Penn State look good in the fight against sweatshops without the university making substantial changes, Quinn said.

"Penn State is trying to get away with as little as possible," Quinn charged.

For the past three years, USAS has been pushing Penn State to join the Designated Suppliers Program, and Quinn said the organization will continue to do so.

Within the garment industry, including that of collegiate apparel, Quinn said the typical system consists of brands pressuring factories to produce more and more. This pressure to increase production results causes a reduction in ethical working conditions, Quinn said.

The "Bookstore" and the DSP program are similar, Quinn said, but the scope of the programs is different. The "Bookstore" offers concentrated relief by protecting one factor, Quinn said. Rather than a case-by-case change, USAS is advocating systemat-

ic change to the working conditions and the relationship with brands. A systematic change can be made through the DSP program, Quinn said.

"The DSP holds brands accountable to working with codes of conduct," Quinn said, "and that would affect thousands of factories."

Quinn said the "Bookstore" program was initially geared toward universities that were already participating in the DSP.

Quinn said the "Bookstore" program is a "filler program" and a "patch fix," and it should not be intended to replace the DSP.

"This can't be the last step," Quinn said. "needs to step it up."

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