



CASE STUDY

Tompkins County's Save The Food Campaign

The Tompkins County Solid Waste Management Division's (TCSW) mission is to develop and implement a sustainable materials management strategy for Tompkins County. With a focus on the state's solid waste management hierarchy, this approach utilizes and prioritizes environmentally sound, cost-effective, socially responsible, and safe practices. This is accomplished through coordinated administrative, operational, and educational programs that maximize diversion with the 4R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Rebuy) as a focal point.

CHALLENGE

With a goal of 85% waste diversion by 2030, TCSW seeks to maximize opportunities for residents to practice the 4R's through infrastructure development, programming, and outreach. Services are available to Tompkins County residents, educational institutions, businesses and other organizations. Food scraps recycling and diversion programs are the next frontier for recycling in Tompkins County. As a result, a residential campaign was developed to promote food waste prevention, with a focus on incorporating new concepts and tools into existing outreach strategies, such as social media or classroom presentations.

SOLUTION

The comprehensive food waste prevention campaign included the following components:

- Community Film Screening of Just Eat It
- School Classroom Presentations
- Food waste Prevention Challenge
- Social Media Campaign

With support from the New York State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSP2I), TCSW developed outreach materials and a plan for the initiative.

The Food Waste Prevention Challenge, initiated at certain food scraps recycling drop spots, encouraged participants to implement the source reduction tips from the educational materials. The overall focus of the initiative was to help residents employ simple strategies to reduce waste while saving money.



Photo Credit: Thomas Hoebbel Photography



Photo Credit: Tompkins County

CHALLENGE

- Food waste prevention is a key issue in New York State, one with many opportunities for significant improvement through residential outreach in local communities
- Develop and employ a strategy as a component of an integrated solid waste management system that facilitates recycling, composting, waste reduction and other diversion activities to the greatest extent possible

SOLUTION

- A comprehensive project for food waste source reduction featuring community education and discussion, community based social marketing, and a social media campaign, all designed to inspire residents to take steps toward reducing food waste

RESULTS

- All of the goals of the project were met, proving it to be a resounding success
- Seven events involving presentations, tours, and the food waste documentary Just Eat It, were held.
- In addition to various materials including:
 - Food Waste Prevention Video
 - Eat First Box Label
 - Fridge Storage Guide Magnet
 - School Lesson Plan Module

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RESULTS

All goals of the project were met, proving it to be resounding success. Seven events involving presentations, tours, and the food waste documentary Just Eat It, were held to promote food waste reduction in the community.

Smart Cooking: It Makes Cents



RECYCLING AND
SOLID WASTE
OF TOMPKINS COUNTY



New York State
Pollution Prevention Institute

Photo Credit: Thomas Hoebbel Photography

In addition to the events, various materials were distributed to improve community understanding of food waste reduction at the source including:

- Food Waste Prevention Video – [Smart Cooking: It Makes Cents](#)
- [Save The Food Project Manual](#)
- Grocery List Pads
- Smart Storage Guide Leaflet
- School Lesson Plan Module

Save the Food: Tips for reducing food waste

<p>SMART SHOPPING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid buying food you already have: check your fridge and cupboards before shopping. • Minimize impulse buys: make a shopping list before going to the store and stick to it. 	<p>SMART STORAGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Store delicate veggies in the high-humidity crisper. • Keep most fruits in the low-humidity crisper. • Keep certain vegetables like onions, garlic and potatoes, outside of the fridge. • Store leftovers in clear containers to see what's in your fridge. • Move food that's likely to spoil soon to a visible area. 	<p>SMART PREP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freeze food such as bread, sliced fruit, or meat that you know you won't be able to eat in time. • Prepare and cook perishable items, then freeze them for use throughout the month. • Plan meals around leftover ingredients.
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For more information visit recycletompskins.org or call us at 607-273-6632

The educational materials were found to make a difference, as during the course of several months, a 3.4% decrease in food waste weight was measured for participants in the Food Waste Prevention Challenge. This project was the first step in a larger residential food recovery program that TCSW plans to launch. The manual created for this food waste prevention project is available online to help other communities and organizations set up similar programs in their own areas.

ONLINE MEDIA

- [Website](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)

“Our goal is to reduce food waste before it is generated. We hope to share simple, accessible strategies that can help our community save money, conserve resources and reduce waste, while making food more available to those in need. Project support from New York State Pollution Prevention Institute helped us develop initial tools, including high quality, useful resources that can be used in an ongoing effort to encourage and create actual food waste reduction. We are thankful to NYSPP2I for the support and hope that others around New York State will use our resources to start their own food waste prevention initiatives!”

-Kat McCarthy, Tompkins County's Waste Reduction and Recycling Specialist

NYSPP2I PARTNERS



10 Regional Technology Development Centers

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