

Make everyday Earth Day - Green your Choices - Save Resources - Be Happy



2020 Vision of Greener Decade

A brief summary of the past, with a bit of vision for the future, at the start of a new decade! Will County accomplished a lot since the new millennium but these past 10 years have been our greenest, yet! Thousands of residents utilize not only our recycling, reuse and education programs each year, but also visit our website, interact with us on social media while also conserving energy and water resources daily. Please see the articles below on the success we've had thanks to your participation this past decade and make a resolution to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and ReThink to improve our environment, save some money and make your life better every day in 2020 and beyond!

[Visit Our Website](#)

Recycle Electronics

Since 2000, Will County has offered Electronics Recycling to residents. It began with one-day events offered annually but by 2007 we had four permanent sites offering service year round. In 2010, by State law, manufacturers had to start funding recycling of what was viewed as the fastest growing waste stream in our landfills. In 2012, residents were no longer allowed to place many electronic items in the garbage. Soon we had grown to 13 year round drop-off sites and several one-day collections, taking in over 4 million pounds of



residential electronics in 2015. That swiftly changed in 2016, as we lost manufacturer funding and had to "fix" the law to reinstate it. We closed all the sites in February, but by July, had five year round sites back up for residents. Today we average just under 2 million pounds a year but have several communities that have added service to their municipal contracts. We still ask consumers to purchase durable items, not just the least expensive, and hold manufacturers accountable for the resources used in the myriad of devices we rely upon every day.

Household Hazardous Waste participation Grew

In the 1990s the Illinois EPA began funding one-day Household Hazardous Waste events around the State. By 2000, Will County had become an annual funding sponsor of our own one-day events and of a permanent HHW site in Naperville. By 2010, we averaged five one-day events each year, preventing thousands of gallons of liquids from entering landfills or waterways. In 2015 we began accepting latex paint, a non-hazardous item, due to resident demand. This resulted in overwhelming turnouts that forced us to switch to an appointment system for these events. Our goal has always been to keep cars moving, prevent not only the pollution of the material but also the frustration associated with long wait times. In 2018 and 2019 we were able to serve more people at faster times than at the beginning of the decade. Moving forward, we recognize that the abundance of latex paint continues to contribute to backups even with the appointment system. We will explore new ways to address the need for recycling options for this material and hope to work with paint manufactures for the ultimate solution.



School Education Program Growth & Change

The Will County Earth Flag program began in 1998 but really hit it's stride over the past 10 years as it averaged 50 schools per year formally joining. Many institutions went far beyond two-sided copying and recycling of paper to include solar installations, gardens, food scrap composting in classroom worm bins, and a successful pilot program with 2 high schools offering cafeteria food scrap recycling to students with a contractor taking the material to a commercial compost site. This new decade will continue to offer innovative ideas to schools to help them save money, reduce the impact of their services on the environment while enhancing student's understanding of how to re-imagine our world in a sustainable way!



Outreach Expansion and Diversity

Will County dramatically changed its website in 2010 by launching WillCountyGreen.com on America Recycles Day. Over the past decade, the County has enjoyed growing a social media fanbase on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and even dabbled with blog posts in local on-line newspapers. Staff strives to update the more than 250 pages of information on the website, with the game page continuing to be a big draw but only after Electronics and Household Hazardous Waste! This newsletter is also a new creation, with the first one in 2010. We look forward to making the website more mobile device friendly as well as relying on social media for dynamic interaction with our communities.



Energy Efforts Electrified

2010 marked the first time we went from mentioning energy conservation in presentations to pushing innovations in County Buildings and encouraging them in our businesses. While replacing lighting in nearly every building, we also revamped the boiler system at the Sunny Hill Nursing Home and added Cool Roofs to several buildings. We held educational events for businesses and schools. We promoted [SEDAC](#) as a free means to finding financially rewarding updates to everything from insulation to window replacement. Denny's on Rt. 30 in Joliet was instrumental in talking to businesses while Valley View School District became our resource for schools trying to reduce costs through efficiencies!



We can't talk about energy without mentioning Solar. We were the **FIRST** County in Illinois to be designated [SolSmart](#) for our efforts to promote solar, make our ordinances solar friendly and to pursue solar opportunities for our buildings. We began purchasing half of all the energy we use from renewable resources and will continue to promote cleaner energy sources to residents, businesses, schools and non-profits. We expect to offer the Solarize Chicagoland program for the second time in 2020 to give residents a way to participate in discounted and guaranteed solar group buying with assistance from C.U.B. Will County's energy future is bright!

Book Reuse and Recycling Remains Important

Will County has offered a Book Reuse and Recycling event annually since 1999 but the last decade has seen the annual 3-day event held at Pilcher Park grow in both donations and reuse customers! Over a hundred thousand books were taken through these years with many schools and libraries donating. In addition, local groups have begun offering Sharefest events and Really, Really Free Markets to redistribute books to children and adults throughout the County at additional times



of the year. Books are treasures that don't belong in the garbage and we will continue to promote donation and reuse events whenever possible!

Water Conservation Gets Serious

Over the past year, the City of Joliet has brought the issue of water scarcity to the forefront and we have enhanced our efforts to address conservation from simple inclusion in presentations, as was standard over the past ten years, to a full fledged water conservation event with the Slammers this past summer. We offer water saving tips nearly every week on social media and in most of the monthly newsletters like this, as well as highlighting best practices on our website with links to additional resources. We expect the cost of water to continue to increase in the future, meaning people and businesses will need ways to reduce consumption for their own financial savings as well as due to environmental concerns. We look forward to working with a wide variety of partners and stakeholders to improve knowledge and implementation of conservation practices.



ReUse Opportunities Surged

The Great Recession of 2008 ushered in a variety of reuse opportunities as Thrift Stores, ReSale Shops, Consignment Boutiques, and On-Line Shopping grew exponentially throughout the past 10 years. There are more chances to sell your outgrown toys, clothes, and home goods today than at any time in history. No longer are you at the mercy of neighbors attending your yard sale, you have social media, e-bay, on-line papers, and even free give-away sites to find what you want to keep what you don't want from going to the trash. Interested in starting your own antique shop or reuse establishment, be sure to learn more through the [Association of ReSale Professionals](#).



Image Courtesy of the Association of ReSale Professionals

What happens to the curbside recyclables (3rd in series)

Recycling markets have been on a roller coaster ride the past two decades and we expect the same in the 2020s. In this third installment of the series, the sorting at the MRF (Material Recovery Facility) to prepare our unwanted items is the focus. Each MRF markets materials to different Paper Mills, Plastic Recyclers, Aluminum and Steel Mills. While each market can dictate the fee they will pay for a bale of material based on the quality (i.e. clean, dry) there is a basic adherence to national standards.



A MRF may sort a bale of pure aluminum cans to get the highest payment but they will also sort a mixed aluminum bale that contains cans, foil, bakeware, empty aerosols, and accept lower payments. Likewise, a MRF may make a bale of all plastics but the value is negative so they will try to make bales of all #1 with contamination extremely limited. Some paper mills may not want glossy paper or shiny receipt paper where many others are able to accept it. The MRF will sort all the materials based on the markets they work to serve. This will continue in the future.



The cost to meet the market demands will continue to be placed on consumers unless laws are passed, such as in Canada and Europe, to involve manufacturers in the responsibility to recover and reuse or re-manufacturer their packaging.



Electric Vehicles and the EV Charger Infrastructure

Just like Solar, the price of Electric Vehicles and Hybrid Plug-In vehicles has been falling since 2010. Each year, more people are purchasing new EV and Hybrid EVs and each year, more public charging stations have been added. These vehicles are now offered by every auto manufacturer. There are electric delivery trucks, pick-ups, buses, fire engines, and more. While most owners charge at home, there are many that need public charging at places of work, shopping centers, restaurants, recreational areas and more. The used vehicle market, coupled with the dropping cost of batteries is making electric vehicles cost competitive while also less expensive to maintain. Europe is already seeing a surge in EV adoption, and we will continue to see it grow here.



Landfill Methane Gas turned into Electricity

In October of 2010 Will County broke ground on a Gas-to-Energy Facility to turn the flared off methane gas generated by the Prairie View Landfill into electricity. Over the years, the facility was opened and began providing enough power to the electric grid to provide electricity for over 3,000 homes a year and generating over \$3 million in revenue to the County. However, within a few years, the County noticed that its landfill was producing higher quantities of gas than could be utilized, resulting in waste through flare off. Recently, the County began exploring the idea of turning the methane into compressed gas to be used as an alternative fuel. This project is expected to move forward over the next several years, making additional use of a resource as well as funding energy efficiency and other County improvements.



Happy New Year from all of us to all of you!



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Play a fun game!



Join the School
Earth Flag
Program



Virtual Tour
Tour Recycling
Sites



EV Charging



Commuter Options



Community and
School Garden
Program



Farmer's Markets
and Fresh Food
Options



Solar Info



Wind Info



Water
Conservation



Geothermal Info

Upcoming Events

String Light Recycling
Will County Office Building
Will County Land Use
Sunny Hill Nursing Home
Homer Glen Village Hall
All Electronic Drop-Off Sites
Dec 1 - Jan 31

Recyclepalooza
By Appointment Only
(Appointments Open in late January)
Joliet
Saturday
April 18
8am-3pm

Textile Collection Week
Joliet
Monday - Friday
May 4 - 8
8:30am-4:30pm

Green Drinks
Gatto's
New Lenox
Wednesday
January 15
6-8pm

Earth Day
50th Anniversary National
Wednesday
April 22

Bluestem Festival
Joliet
Saturday
May 16

HHW
By Appointment Only
(Appointments Open in late January)
Homer Glen
Saturday
TBA
8am-3pm

Arbor Day National
(Plant a Tree)
Friday
April 24

Book ReUse & Recycling Event
Joliet
Friday - Sunday
June 5 - 7
9am-4pm

Earth Hour
Global (Lights Out)
Saturday
March 28
8:30-9:30pm

Medication Take-Back
National - DEA
Saturday
April 25
Locations & Time
TBA



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STAY CONNECTED:



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