



HARVARD

Campus Services

ENERGY & FACILITIES

Recycling Update

Spring 2020

Emergency Move-out: Staff and Volunteers Rise to the Challenge

When the University announced that the public health emergency would require all students to move out of undergraduate residences by the Sunday before Spring Break, 3-15-20 and not return to campus, Harvard Recycling had to make drastic accommodations. Normally we have three weeks from the start of undergraduate move-out to the end of senior move-out. This year we would have five days. All our staff began 7-day operations and we cancelled vacations for two of us. We got vital help from hundreds of staff from Campus Service groups including Custodial, Landscape and Parking Services.

The Harvard Habitat for Humanity volunteers who normally help us receive, sort and stage 200 truckloads of donations to their Stuff Sale could not be here to help as usual, as they had to move out too. In anticipation of losing volunteers, **Laurie Chromey** of Phillips Brooks House was able to recruit five staff and alumni to help replace HHH (thanks **Abel, Jose, Jesse Leavitt, and Nesim Young**) We did not have time to fold, label, cut hand-holds and deliver the large Donation Station boxes, so when **Kris Locke** of the Office for Sustainability called and offered to help us, we asked if she could recruit a team to meet our truck in Harvard Yard and put together 50 Donation Stations, which enabled us to get them out to the residences days before our own staff could have done it (thanks **Kris, Heather Henricksen, Erin Tighe, David Havelick, and Jason Barcus** of the Office for Sustainability, plus **Betsy Shortell, Ken Toy, and Andre Fucci of Harvard University Mail Services**).

Over the last two days of the Move-out, by far the busiest, we had an immense surge of volunteers who came to our Allston warehouse to help us receive and sort out about 500 cubic yards of surplus clothing, appliances, books, supplies, food and cosmetics. This is equivalent to the contents of an entire five-car MBTA train. One after another, volunteers crammed our phones with texts offering help. We didn't even get the names of some of the helpers, but here are the ones we know about: **Karin Vander Schaaf** and **Louis Mitchell** of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government; **Pattee McGarry** of the Chemistry Department and her daughter **Greta Propp**; **Scott Ruescher** of the Harvard Graduate School of Education; **Kris Locke** (again!), Harvard Office for Sustainability; **Jerusha Achterberg** of the Division of Continuing Education with her partner **Matt Jarmusik**; and our extraordinary volunteers from our neighboring communities including **Helen Snively, Debby Galef, Mary Verhage and Leah Beckett** of the Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee; **Joe Wooters** from Brighton; **Marshall Garthe** from Marblehead; **Kimberly Simonsen** and **Nancy Bjornsen**, Cambridge neighbors and veteran volunteers; **Priscilla Smith** from Brookline; **Moujheddine Toumi**; and last but not least, **Ilyass Rakim**, who not only bought thousands of dollars worth of books donated to Harvard Habitat for Humanity, he also volunteered for seven consecutive days, stopping only when to take his wife to the hospital to deliver their daughter on Sunday, 3-22-20.

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Noble volunteers on the Saturday 3-14-20 shift (left to right): Abel, Jose, Louis Mitchell, Nancy Bjornsen, Helen Snively, Kris Locke, Pattee McGarry, Jerusha Achterberg, Karin Vander Schaaf, Emilia, Greta Propp, Marshall Garthe, Joe Wooters, and Kimberly Simonsen.



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There were also considerable donations that cannot be sold at the Stuff Sale, including non-perishable food, cosmetics, feminine hygiene products, children's toys and supplies and other goods. Our volunteers enabled us to save these for several charities including Allston-Brighton Food Pantry, MAAP of the Cambridge Friends Meeting House, and Divine Sisters of Mercy of Haiti.

In the face of this terrible disruption to the lives of our Harvard students, these noble volunteers helped us to secure a rich harvest of goods for the HHH Stuff Sale. We hope the sale can happen as usual during the August-September Move-in period. This sale will not only enable HHH to raise funds to support their mission to build housing for the needy; it will also divert over 200 tons of goods from disposal and save returning Harvard students thousands of dollars. Thanks to one and all. We will never forget your heart-warming service to Harvard Recycling during this scary time.

Left: Volunteer extraordinaire Karin Vander Schaaf helps sift through the flood of donations from the emergency Move-out.

Good Clean Garbage: New Focus on Specs

Vendors that receive our trash and recycling are demanding cleaner recyclables and trashier trash. Stricter standards for recyclables world-wide have forced our vendor, Casella Recycling, to reject any contaminated deliveries. Non-recyclable materials such as plastic bags and films, foams, and bottles of any laboratory product, even distilled water, are strictly prohibited at Casella. During 2018, Harvard had over 30 loads judged as "Contaminated" for which we had to pay a penalty fee. We worked hard to partner with our custodians, caterers, Office for Sustainability and other members of the campus community to exclude the worst contaminants such as plastic bags, food and beverage "Yuck" waste.

Our education efforts seem to be having an effect: since January 2019, we have only had 3 failed loads of recycling. Unfortunately, many laboratories judged that they were not capable of excluding chemical bottles from their recycling, so they suspended single stream collection. We hope this service can be restored once markets improve. Please continue to keep recycling clean! Here are some printable posters describing our current specifications:

Massachusetts "RecycleSmart" poster: https://recyclesmartma.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Recycle_Smart_Partner_Handout-2.pdf

Harvard-customized "Recycle," "Compost," and "Trash" posters and labels here: <https://green.harvard.edu/topics/waste/signage>



**NO Cardboard
in Trash**

Please empty, flatten & recycle.

*Disposal of corrugated cardboard is prohibited in Massachusetts under 310 CMR 19.000.
<https://recyclesmartma.org/>*

But we not only need to keep recycling cleaner. We also need to work just as hard to continue diverting clean recyclables from our trash. Three loads delivered to Republic Services' trash transfer station contained over 15% recyclables last year. Cardboard boxes are a special problem. We generate a lot at Harvard! During the first week of each semester, most Harvard residences receive over 500 boxes per day. These can be parcels from students' permanent homes, but most packages are on-line purchases, including books, clothing, laundry detergent and thousands of other goods. If you would like to access the "No Cardboard in Trash" sign at left, please let us know

and we will give you access to the file. Your building can be fined if anyone throws cardboard in your trash dumpster, so watch your own waste stream and secure your dumpster from unauthorized dumping by delivery trucks, neighbors and contractors. Food scraps are also banned from disposal by state regulations. Please compost all food residuals you and your guests do not consume.

Other components of our recyclables have diminished due to consumer trends, better engineering and stricter standards for recyclables. There are far fewer newspapers and magazines than when we started. Packaging has also become thriftier. For example, the average weight of an empty 16.9 ounce (.5L) single serve PET water or soda bottle was over 19 grams in 2000. By 2014, the weight of an empty bottle had declined to 9.25 g. That's less than the weight of two large paper clips! Please keep your recycling clean and put no recyclables into your trash. Thanks for your help!

HOW TO RECYCLE CLOTHING WITH HARVARD LOGOS?

Several Harvard departments have contacted us with questions about re-use or recycling of logo or branded clothing or gear. The disposition site is up to the donor. We offer three options for reuse or recycling. There is also a secure shredding option through DataShredder. This will prevent re-use of your garments, but may allow recycling the fibers. Contact Jay Wallus at jwallus@datashredder.net to learn how to get logo garments and gear securely destroyed. Here are the options Harvard Recycling offers:

If the donor does not care if the garments or gear are re-used locally as they are, simply include the goods with any other items you may be donating for re-use and we will pick them up from any of our Bulk Recycling sites. Ask your building manager for more information. We will distribute the goods at our Monday and Thursday Surplus Distribution and FreeCycle events once the public health emergency subsides. This would enable your garments to be used by anyone.

If the donor would not like the garments or gear worn locally but does not mind if they are used in developing countries, arrange with Harvard Recycling for a special pickup. We will send the garments overseas for use in developing countries through our trusted partners. We have outfitted many athletic teams abroad with Harvard wear. The most successful placements of this type are clothing that is sized “small” and wearable in warm weather.

If the donor would not like anyone else to be seen with the logo garments or items, arrange with Harvard Recycling for a special pickup. We will bring the garments to our warehouse for the “School to Work” vocational training program of the LABBB Collaborative. LABBB’s special needs students of high school age will cut the logos out of the garments and gear. We will discard the logo patches securely and scrap the rest of the garments for textile recycling if possible. This will make them unwearable, but the fibers in the garments can be recycled into industrial wiping rags, insulation and other applications through our Simple Recycling partners.



HARVARD TOUR OF SAVE THAT STUFF'S ORGANICS PROCESS

Save That Stuff hosted a tour of the Centralized Organics Recycling facility they host in Charlestown for members of the Harvard community. Owned and operated by Waste Management, the facility receives organics (also known as “compost”) from Harvard and many other locations where it is processed for digestion into biogas for electricity generation. See Waste Management’s fabulous video about the CORE here:

[WM Boston CORE](#)

CAMBRIDGE TRASH PLUMMET'S BELOW 2020 GOAL

The City of Cambridge has met its goal of reducing its trash by 30% from 2008 levels by 2020. Banning plastic bags and expanding curbside composting to include all residences under 13 units made the biggest contribution towards this goal. Starting this fall, Cambridge DPW is also collecting food scraps from high-rises. Read more about this stunning achievement in the Cambridge Chronicle here:

<https://cambridge.wickedlocal.com/news/20200214/cambridge-achieves-trash-reduction-milestone-early>

PROTECT COMPACTOR HOSES—THREE SPILLS

We have had three spills of hydraulic fluid caused by delivery vehicles driving over the pressure hoses for trash and recycling compactors. Our vendor partner responsible for maintaining the machines, Maguire Equipment, has minimized exposed hoses but somehow other delivery drivers still crush them. We have upgraded all exposed hoses to the maximum strength available, but even these will not stand up to getting run over by heavy trucks. We have the least toxic oil in the hydraulic systems, but even so, when the hoses are crushed, the mineral oil flows into storm drains and eventually the Charles and Muddy Rivers. Thanks for conveying this to your loading dock staff and vendor partners!



VALENTINE'S COSMETICS DRIVE 2020

Thanks to all contributors to our 2020 Valentine's Cosmetics Drive! We recovered over 1,000 pounds of shampoo, nail polish, feminine hygiene products, reusable shopping bags and other goods to benefit the women living in the Cambridge Family Shelter of the YWCA. Biggest contributors were the Business School, the Kennedy School of Government, the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, and the Graduate School of Education. Thanks to (left to right in the photo below) Captain Will Stainier, Captain Tatiana Jimenez, Megan Ter Haar, Georgia Bradley and the rest of the Zero Waste Team for sorting out and cleaning up the donations; Kris Locke, Anne Miller Sargent and Emily Flynn Pesquera of the Office for Sustainability; and especially to Betsy Shortell, Andre Fucci, and all drivers for Harvard Mail Services who helped us consolidate donations from across campus.

ALLSTON FIXIT CLINIC

We had a great time fixing headphones, clothing, jewelry, a ukulele case and other items at Harvard's sixth Fixit Clinic on Saturday, February 8th! Thanks to Jason Clark of the Ed Portal for hosting. Our fix ratio was over 70%. We had also scheduled a Fixit Clinic for Earth Day at the Cabot Science Library as part of the Cambridge Science Festival, but we had to postpone it due to new public gathering rules. Here is a clip from San Mateo CA where they have conducted many Fixit Clinics:

<https://youtu.be/qJtNrsqtAs0>



OFF-CAMPUS RECYCLING NEWS:

Refurbished mills stir hope for better markets: Nine Dragons Paper Company bought two paper mills in Maine. The one in Rumford will be turning over 200,000 tons of scrap paper into pulp for export to China annually. <https://bangordailynews.com/2019/05/21/news/lewiston-auburn/how-a-chinese-company-plans-to-revitalize-2-struggling-maine-mills/>. Also, see this NY Times article about the opening of the Nine Dragons mill in Old Town, Maine. Buddhist monks and a Feng Shui consultant accompanied "Chairlady" Zhang Yin to open the plant. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/15/us/maine-mill-china.html>

Harvard alum Chris Johnson shares this 45-second video of a boy trying valiantly but unsuccessfully to move a recycle tote against the wind: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJnwa9xvqMg>

MASSRECYCLE "DON'T GIVE UP NOW!" PODCAST offers hope in these troubled times for recycling. Check out Republic's fabulous Recycling Manager Gretchen Carey, also President of MassRecycle, updating the State of Recycling. Gretchen has come to present at several Harvard locations in the past few months as we best align the campus's current recycling efforts with real-world market and regulatory conditions. Listen to her podcast with MassRecycle Vice President Waneta Trabert, last December:

<https://podcasts.google.com/?feed=aHR0cHM6Ly9na2NhcmV5LnBvZG9tYXRpYy5jb20vcnNzMi54bWw&episode=aHR0cHM6Ly9na2NhcmV5LnBvZG9tYXRpYy5jb20vZW50cnkvMjAyMC0wMS0wOVQwNi8zMF8xNi0wOF8wMA&hl=en&ved=2ahUKEwiK9pbBou3nAhUDknIEHRY0AYwQicUEegQIChAE&cp=6>

TERRACYCLE PROGRAM DISCONTINUED

We are sorry to tell you that we have discontinued the TerraCycle program for recycling hard-to-recycle items. We cannot justify the expense, air pollution, traffic and noise impacts of collecting extremely bulky materials such as chips bags and empty cosmetics containers. These items were never truly recycled, but down-cycled into construction products like parking bumpers. We appreciate your efforts over the years to divert these items from disposal. If you want to continue TerraCycling, you can buy one of their Zero Waste boxes with pre-paid shipping available here:

https://earthhero.com/search/terracycle?gclid=Cj0KCQiAqY3zBRDQARisAJeCVxOrX8_BzFzkEqgoOLcuT4oMqC4JJaxRkqgDFQbBa4j90IVvWnpxg8UaAhfHEALw_wcB&fwptype=zero-waste-box

SURPLUS DISTRIBUTION SUSPENDED

During the health emergency, we are discontinuing our twice-weekly Surplus Distribution events at our warehouse in Allston. We hope to re-open once public gatherings become possible. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may cause.



CAMPUS NATURE WATCH: Signs of Spring

Back when we were all on campus and there was morning rush hour, a MUTE SWAN walking parallel to the Charles was halted by Larz Anderson Bridge, with peak morning traffic obstructing its path. The swan got help from two passers-by, who raised the ire of impatient drivers with abundant honking horns. Dan Bock and his wife Mirela stopped vehicles in both directions and escorted the swan slowly across both lanes of traffic, herding the swan to safety on the west side of the bridge. The swan eventually took wing and flew further west, landing in a quieter part of the Charles upstream. See the swan taking off in the photo below, leaving the Cambridge side of the river with Lavietes Pavillion in the background. Thanks Dan and Mirela!

SKUNK marks neighborhood of 175 N. Harvard Street with characteristic scent [claiming breeding territory?] ... Male CARDINAL in elm tree across the street from Harvard University Housing's 29 Garden Street chirps possessively, claiming his territory... Posse of three BLUE JAYS noisily patrols Botanic Gardens neighborhood before moving up Observatory Hill at Harvard Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics... In mid-February, a pair of RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS swims among ice-free channels of the Charles River in front of Weld Boat House, diving and surfacing with cork-like buoyancy... RED-TAILED HAWK captures GRAY SQUIRREL west of University Hall in Harvard Yard and nonchalantly begins to disembowel the rodent, distracting tourists from their John Harvard statue photography... GRAY SQUIRRELS, one velvety black, graze on last year's acorns in front of Massachusetts Hall... Flock of ROBINS grazes for worms on the sun-warmed turf in front of Flagstaff Park across the street from Littauer Center... GREAT BLUE HERON catches wiggling fish in Charles River cove abutting Christian Herter Park. **Thanks** to Campus Nature Watchers Dan Bock, Mirela Bok, Aryt Alasti, Sonia Ketchian, Erika McCaffrey, and Les Takacs!

