

# FEED THE BIN

## SCHOOL RECYCLING PROGRAM

### FY 2009 END OF YEAR REPORT

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# FROM THE EDUCATORS

As we wrap up the 2009 Fiscal Year, we look back on a year of great change and great success. The FEED THE BIN program moved from the Division of Solid Waste Management to the newly created Cooperative Extension Division within Environmental Services. The program saw a reduction in staff from six full time employees to three. Many new initiatives planned for FY 09 were put on hold as the remaining staff members were asked to refocus on the original purpose of FEED THE BIN: creating lifelong recyclers through innovative programming and daily practice and providing students with the tools to become environmental ambassadors to their communities.

The re-emphasis on our founding principles proved to be a success. In March of 2009, FEED THE BIN received the American Forest and Paper Association's School Recycling Award. This award is a great and highly coveted honor. Our program was selected among 120 applicants in 36 states. We received a beautiful plaque and a \$2000 cash award. From that recognition we have received calls from school recycling programs across the country looking to share resources and request advice.



Three schools will be honored at the annual FEED THE BIN Recognition Ceremony in the Fall of 2009. Leesville Road High School recycled the most paper of any school in the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) with an astounding 28,141 pounds. Partnership Elementary School recycled the most per capita with 26.8 pounds of paper recycled for each student. Morrisville Elementary School had the greatest increase in the amount of paper recycled, going up 157% from 2,556 pounds in FY08 to 6,586 in FY09. The Outstanding Recycling Coordinator Award will be given to Anita Hynus of Martin Middle School.

Overall, FY 09 can be considered a great success, despite the many changes. What always remained constant was our dedication to recycling and the dedication of the many Recycling Coordinators and Administrators at FEED THE BIN Schools.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Dunstan  
Chrissie Koroivui  
Liani Yirka  
Environmental Program Coordinators  
Wake County Department of Environmental Services

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FEED THE BIN (FTB) is a school recycling program sponsored by the Wake County's Department of Environmental Services, through the Cooperative Extension and Solid Waste Management Divisions. The program funds mixed paper recycling at Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) schools and provides complimentary educational resources for students and teachers. The program began in 2004 with 25 schools. Since that time, nearly 6 million pounds of paper have been recycled, saving over 8,700 cubic yards of landfill space.

In the 2009 Fiscal Year, 153 FTB Schools recycled 1.5 million pounds of paper, which was 3% below the previous year's total. We believe this to be a result of the declining global economy rather than a decline in participation, especially when considering a nationwide decline of 20-30% in the production of recycled materials as cited in *Pulp and Paper Week (May 15, 2009)*.

The program added nine schools during FY 09: two brand new schools and seven schools that had chosen to delay the start of the program until this year.

Education is a major component of FTB and staff conducted over 270 presentations in 111 schools. Two new presentations were added, and teacher kits were promoted in an effort to be flexible and meet the varying needs of teachers.

As part of the County's overall anti-litter initiative, litter was added as an additional solid waste topic. All presentations now include an anti-litter message and clean-up kits were created to encourage more school groups to clean up litter in their schools and communities. Five high schools participated in a pilot program to reduce litter on their campuses through the use of gooseneck trashcans.

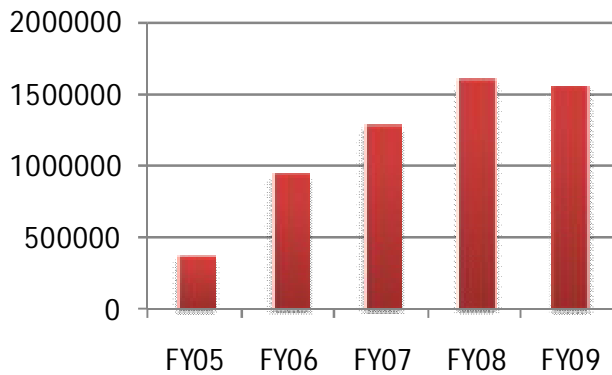
In addition to meeting the needs of the Wake County Public School System, educators also served the larger Wake County community through events such as HollyFest and by sponsoring two Public Landfill Tour Days. Staff also gave presentations and donated informational materials to fourteen businesses and non-WCPSS school groups.

Staff hope to continue and expand upon existing initiatives for FY 2010, including curriculum revisions, specific anti-litter educational programs, and new materials for landfill tours. Plans include a volunteer program to help with new programs.

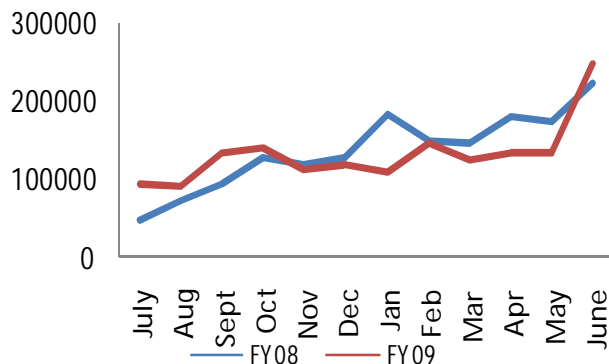
"Wake County schools will become environmentally literate and motivated to be active environmental stewards by adopting practices that protect the environment on their school campus..."  
Wake County Environmental Stewardship Agenda

# PAPER RECYCLED

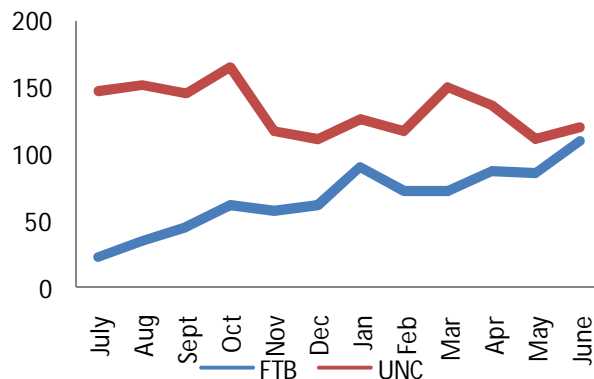
**Figure 1:** Total pounds of paper recycled through the FEED THE BIN program since FY 05



**Figure 2:** A comparison of the total pounds of paper recycled per month in FY 08 and FY 09.



**Figure 3:** A comparison of the total tons of paper recycled per month by UNC-CH and FEED THE BIN.



FTB schools recycled a total of 1.5 million pounds of paper (11.3 pounds per student) during FY 2009. Although 43% of schools showed an increase in per capita recycling, this total fell 3% below the total paper recycled in FY08 (Figure 1) and 28% below the goal of 2 million. From July-October, schools were on target to exceed both FY08 and the 2 million pound goal (Figure 2). The month of November saw a sharp decline in total pounds recycled, which coincided with the downturn in the global economy.

Recycling Coordinators (RCs) cited several reasons for the decline in paper recycled, none of which was a decrease in participation. Many cited the reduction in free newspapers from the News and Observer (N&O). According to N&O records, during FY08 WCPSS schools received approximately 1,294,000 free or discounted newspapers. During FY09, schools received just 345,000 newspapers, a decline of 73%. RCs also stated that many schools asked teachers to reduce the amount of paper used in an effort to reduce costs, although exact numbers could not be obtained.

FTB was not alone in its decline as recycling rates across the country also declined during the same time period. The May 15<sup>th</sup> issue of *Pulp and Paper Week* reported that the generation of recycled materials was down 20-30% from the same time last year.

The paper recovery of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill can be used as a comparison program (Figure 3). They also saw a decline in paper recycling starting in November, and were down 44% overall from FY08.

“Whenever I drop something in the bin, I think of my future and how this small thing can help save our environment and our community.”  
Will, 5th Grade Recycling Team Member

# OPERATIONS



## **SCHOOLS BEING SERVED**

At the close of FY09 and the 2008-09 school year, 153 out of 156 WCPSS schools (98%) were on the FTB program, representing 138,150 students. At the start of the year, seven schools had chosen not to participate in the program. Four of those schools and two brand new WCPSS schools subsequently joined the program.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

This year we began using Constant Contact to send system-wide emails. This greatly improved our ability to send out timely information including bimonthly e-newsletters and last minute pick-up route changes. Our webpage was revamped to be more user friendly. Each month we posted recycling data and highlighted top performing schools.

Toward the end of FY 08, WCPSS began allowing FTB to use their inter-office courier system for letters and small packages. This service was used extensively throughout FY09, greatly reducing our need for postage.

## **2009 ANNUAL MEETING**

The 2009 FEED THE BIN Annual Meeting was held January 13, 2009. Over 100 representatives from 80 schools attended one of two sessions to receive program updates and share best practices. Schools received their first ever "Recycling Report Card." These mid-year reports offered schools a chance to review their year-to-date recycling numbers in comparison with similar schools. Refreshments were donated from area businesses, including Great Harvest Bread Company, Global Village Coffee, and Whole Foods Market in Raleigh.

"They forgo their recess on Thursdays to complete the recycling—a responsible bunch of students with a great purpose!"  
Kelly Taylor, Recycling Coordinator for Lincoln Heights Elementary School

# EDUCATION



## **PRESENTATIONS**

FEED THE BIN educators conducted 271 presentations, reaching over 31,000 students in 111 schools, or 73% of the schools on the program. Formats included full school assemblies, middle and high school science classes, recycling clubs, Science Days, informational booths, and field trips.

## **NEW PRESENTATIONS**

We added two new presentations this year: a mini-workshop and a solid waste trivia game. The mini-workshop was designed as a capacity building opportunity for our staff to help school clubs improve their recycling programs. Six schools took advantage of this new program (three elementary, two middle, and one high). The solid waste trivia game involved the use of our newly acquired Student Response System. Students were divided into teams and used their handheld “clicker” device to respond to questions displayed on the overhead screen. Seven schools participated in this presentation (two elementary, three middle, two high). The system was also incorporated into our traditional programs in four additional elementary presentations.

## **TEACHER KITS**

FTB teacher kits correspond to FTB lesson plans and provide most if not all of the materials required in the lessons. The kits were heavily promoted at the Annual Meeting in January, and as a result, 23 kits were used in 8 schools during the year. All schools that completed an evaluation indicated that they would use the kits again and recommend them to others.

“As part of the recycling team, I have learned about the importance of recycling, taking things to a MRF, and how to STARVE THE LANDFILL.”  
Valerie, 5th Grade Recycling Team Member

# ANTI-LITTER INITIATIVE



## **ANTI-LITTER EDUCATION**

The Wake County Board of County Commissioners expressed a concern for the appearance of litter on county roadways. Beginning in the Fall of 2008, an anti-litter message was incorporated into all FTB presentations. Students were reminded that all waste has a proper place, either in the recycling bin or in the garbage can.

## **CLEAN-UP KITS**

Litter clean-up kits were created in November of 2008. The purpose of the kits were to provide student groups with the necessary tools to clean up litter on their campus and in their communities. The kits contain gloves, safety vests, litter grabbers, and garbage bags in a large rolling bag. Three kits were requested in the first week they were advertised. By year's end, 12 WCPSS schools checked out the kits, and several schools requested the kits on more than one occasion. The kits were also requested by non-WCPSS groups including two home school groups, Seimens, and a local community center. With just 50% of the clean-ups reported, our kits were used by 161 participants to pick up over 61 bags of litter.

## **HIGH SCHOOL PILOT PROGRAM**

Five WCPSS high schools volunteered to participate in a month-long pilot test aimed at reducing roadside litter and campus litter during March and April 2009. The participating high schools included Apex, Broughton, Holly Springs, Leesville Road, and Wake Forest-Rolesville. Each high school was supplied with a single 50-gallon gooseneck (a.k.a. drive-up) trashcan to be placed in the student parking lot for one month. The data collected by each school indicated that less litter was present on most of the campuses after the installation of the gooseneck trashcans. In total approximately 360 pounds of trash were collected using these trashcans throughout the five campuses.

"Everyone in the group was very impressed with the kit...the kids were eager to get to work right away."  
Barbara Wilkis, PEACE Homeschoolers

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH



## **PUBLIC LANDFILL TOURS**

On November 14, 2008, FTB educators piloted a Public Landfill Tour Day at the South Wake Solid Waste Management Facility. The Public Landfill Tour Day allowed small groups and individuals to tour the landfill. Traditionally, tours have only been offered to school groups. Approximately 25 people attended the pilot tour. On April 25, 2009, FTB partnered with the South Wake Landfill Citizen's Committee, Waste Industries, and the NCSU Solar Center to provide a day of tours in recognition of Earth Day. Seventy citizens attended the tour, and 83% left the tour with a more positive opinion of the landfill.

## **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS/BUSINESSES**

We provided support to ten non-WCPSS educational programs, including Wake Technical Community College, Meredith College, St. Timothy's School, the Franciscan School, Cary Academy, Jordan Learning Center, Girl Scouts—North Carolina Coastal Pines, Wake County Energy Camp, Kids 'R' Kids of Wake Forest, and the West Regional Library. Educators served as a guest speaker at Qualcomm and hosted a booth at an Earth Day fair for Siemens employees. We also sent materials to assist with programs at the Salvation Army, Cary YMCA, and US Food Service.

## **HOLLYFEST**

On October 20, 2008, we co-hosted a booth at HollyFest in Holly Springs with the South Wake Landfill Citizens Committee. The purpose of the booth was to educate local residents about the South Wake Landfill and the services offered at the South Wake Solid Waste Management Facility. Festival attendees were invited to spin a prize wheel and answer questions about recycling and waste disposal.

*"Wonderful tour and very informative. We have increased our recycling since the tour."*

Participant in the April 25 Public Landfill Tour Day

# LOOKING FOWARD



As we highlight our accomplishments from Fiscal Year 2009, we are also looking ahead to new programs for 2010. One of the most exciting programs will be a new volunteer program called Master Recyclers. These community volunteers will provide additional support to FEED THE BIN schools both in the areas of education and operations. Recruitment and training of volunteers is slated to begin in the Fall of 2009 with the expectation that the volunteers will begin entering schools in early 2010. Here are just a few of the other projects we are planning on for the coming year:

- **Distribution of Anti-Litter Materials** in high school driver's education classes and with student parking permits
- **FEED THE BIN Curriculum Revisions** for middle and high school
- **Litter Academy**, a program that would train elementary students to become litter deputies
- **Monthly Public Landfill Tours** offered the second Monday of every month
- **New Landfill Tour Materials** including an activity book for our younger tour participants

## Contact Us:

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"Continued support of our existing infrastructure — and programs like FEED THE BIN - is more important than ever, so that we are prepared to continue to meet increased global demand as the economy rebounds."  
Donna Harman, President and CEO of the American Forest and Paper Association