

Darien News

New initiative encourages more 'green' lunches

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Aiden Smith gets his hand stamped for bringing his lunch in a reusable container as part of Hindley Elementary School's new "Trash Free Tuesdays" program. Photo: Ben Holbrook / CT

A new initiative at [Hindley Elementary School](#) is asking students and parents to think "green" by not generating as much trash.

The new initiative, Trash Free Tuesdays, started two weeks ago as a way to promote economically friendly practices. Parents are encouraged to pack lunches with reusable containers instead of plastic bags and other disposable containers.

The push for Trash Free Tuesdays was originally implemented at [Royle Elementary School](#) by [Kerri Sloan](#) after she moved to Darien from California.

"In California my child's school had Trash Free Tuesdays and I thought Royle would be a perfect fit for the same program," Sloan said. "I had a friend in California who walked me through the steps of getting it started and then we started promoting it through a newsletter we would send to parents every Sunday."

Sloan said the purpose of the program is to raise awareness of our impact on the environment and to encourage kids to continue recycling at home and elsewhere.

For those who are interested in starting a similar program at their schools, Sloan recommended visiting www.gradesofgreen.org which offers a variety of "green" programs.

In addition to reducing the amount of garbage going into landfills, the Trash Free Tuesday program is fun for the kids, Sloan said.

"The kids get pretty excited and they actually listen when you tell them things about recycling," she said. "This is definitely a pretty easy program to get started and it's a fairly simple matter of going in and educating the kids."

Even though the parents put a lot of effort into getting the programs started, Sloan said none of it would have been possible without the support of school administrators.

"Principal Keith Margolus has been so great in his support of all of our Go Green initiatives. He was the main reason these programs were able to get such a great start," Sloan said.

Royle's success with the program prompted a group of Hindley moms to institute the same program.

Holly Homes, one of the program's leaders, said it has already made a significant impact on the amount of garbage being generated in the cafeteria.

"We're really trying to educate parents about not packing lunches in Ziploc bags and to use reusable containers instead," Homes said.

Sabina Harris, who is also involved in the program, said the intent of Trash Free Tuesday is to teach kids about the environment and to make recycling and other environmentally friendly practices a regular part of their lives.

"We're mainly teaching kids about the environment, but we also want to make this a part of their culture," she said.

Harris said custodial staff noticed a difference in the amount of garbage being thrown away.

"I remember speaking with a custodian and he said he thought they were throwing away about one garbage can less of garbage on Tuesdays," she said.

Homes said the program is being focused on the elementary schools because it can be difficult to get kids to participate in it once they reach middle school and high school.

"It's not cool to bring a lunch box when you're in middle school, so we're hoping it will be successful at the elementary level and that behavior will continue as they go to middle school and high school," Homes said.

According to statistics compiled by www.wastefreelunches.org, the average school-age child generates 67 pounds of garbage per school year. In total, an average elementary school will generate 18,760 pounds of a garbage a year.

Trash Free Tuesday doesn't just apply to students who bring their lunches. Harris said the program is encouraging students who buy their lunches to try to eat everything on their plate to eliminate the amount of food waste.

"Even though we are focusing on Tuesdays right now we eventually want to see this practice happen on a daily basis," Homes said.