Teens use tech to cut back on waste

Small actions add up to a cleaner community. Four highschoolers want to put a refreshing, environmentally-friendly drink of water within easy reach for Waterloo Region.

This team of young developers is designing a smartphone app to help people fill their water bottles on the go. Their “tAPP Waterloo” app will show people where to find water bottle filling locations around Waterloo Region. The program’s information comes from BlueW.org, a community-based web page that shows where local shops and restaurants offer free water.

Choosing a refillable bottle lets people take advantage of clean, affordable municipal water. It’s a simple way to create a more sustainable community, and refilling a water bottle helps keep plastic out of the landfill, say the four Grade 9 students.

Saaniya Saraf, Julia Brzustowski, Clare Hanson and Ruby Lyons began their project in early 2018, prompted by Technovation, an event that invites teams of female students to use technology to solve a real problem in their communities.

“I like the idea that we’ve made something and it might help marginally with this real problem,” Hanson said.

For more information about BlueW, go to www.BlueW.org.

Rain barrel sale is back May 11

The Region of Waterloo is making it easy to save water with another rain barrel sale on May 11, 2019. You can buy a discounted barrel for $40 during the one-day sale from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. – or whenever barrels sell out. Barrels will be sold at three locations: Cambridge Centre, Conestoga Mall and Fairview Park Mall parking lots.

Please bring identification to show you live in Waterloo Region. One barrel per household, please.

The 2019 barrels will hold 200 litres and come with easy-to-use attachments including a hose to connect to other barrels and removable mosquito screens.

For more information, visit www.regionofwaterloo.ca/conservation.

Greenhouse gas emissions fall, thanks to resident green bin use

Green isn’t something one buys at the store. A recent survey of our residents revealed that about 75 per cent put out their green bin every week, and 88 per cent put out their blue boxes every week. The majority of home waste is being separated into a blue box or green bin. That’s green.

This survey also showed that 77 per cent of residents put out two bags of garbage or less every second week. You have made a serious commitment to reducing waste by recycling more.

We can confirm with scientific evidence that your actions are helping to fight climate change. Putting food waste into the landfill creates Greenhouse Gases (GHG). By using the green bin to recycle food (and not sending to landfill), you are reducing GHG. Over the last seven years, as a direct result of using the green bin, you have reduced over 22,000 metric tonnes of GHG emissions. The more we green bin, the more GHG emission reductions we achieve.

We had the pleasure of meeting a group of women that illustrate just how green we have become. Between these three families, they have five children in diapers, yet each family puts out one, maybe two, bags of garbage each garbage collection week.

As a community, we are recycling more and wasting less. The result is a positive impact on climate change. Now, that’s really green!

Staci Bearinger, Mary Feldscov and Angie Melchin, at the Woolwich Community Health Centre.
**The path to reduce Greenhouse Gases**

**What choices will you make?**

- **Avoid single use items**
  - About 40 per cent of all consumer plastics are used one time. Wash a fork!

- **Shorten your shower by one minute**
  - Save up to 4,200 litres/year per household. Cutting and pumping all our water creates GHGs.

- **Switch to an efficient WaterSense showerhead**
  - Save up to 13,300 litres/year per household. GHGs saved across the Region: 132,773 tonnes.

- **Eat what you buy**
  - 1/3 of GHGs is from agriculture because four food items is thrown away.

- **Run your dishwasher only when full**
  - Save 1,200 litres/year per household.

- **Recycle your cell phones**
  - GHG emissions to make and use smart phones have climbed 970 per cent in the last 10 years.

- **Find and fix a leaking toilet or tap**
  - Save up to 110,000 litres/year per household. GHGs saved across the Region: 27,300 tonnes.

**Small steps add up**

**Packaging confusion: for the recycling record**

Manufacturers are introducing new types of packaging materials all the time. It can be very confusing, even for us! For the recycling record, here are a few common items:

- **Coffee pods go into the garbage.** It is estimated that 2.6 million coffee pods are thrown out each day in Canada. There are many different brands made with many different materials. Some are labelled “compostable” but even these do not break down in our composting facilities. No matter what type or brand, ALL coffee pods go into the garbage.

- **Mixed materials cannot be recycled.** A paper cylinder can with a metal rim is a mixed material. Snack wrappers like chip bags and granola bar wraps are also a mixed material. They have layers of different materials laminated together. Mixed materials go into the garbage.

**A word from the curb**

**Use two blue boxes:** All containers (bottles, cans, cartons, jars) go into one blue box; all paper and plastic bags (tied into one bag) go into another blue box. This first sort in your home is the most important sort. To be recycled, materials must be well sorted.

- It is 7:01 somewhere! Trucks start at 7 a.m. and you could be 7:01. Collection times on your street can change. Please have all items to the curb by 7 a.m.

- **Would you put your hands in there?** Sharp items, like broken glass, can cause injury. Do not put broken glass or sharp items into the blue box. Wrap these in layers of newspaper and put the bundle into the garbage.

- **Just the pickles please!** Put only food waste in the green bin; save the jars and tubs for the Container bin. Coffee pods go into the garbage.

- **Bulky item and appliance collection is every second week**

**Don’t let the winds carry your recyclables away**

Strong winds can sometimes lift recyclables from your blue box and carry them down the street. Most vulnerable to winds are lightweight plastic containers, paper and plastic bags. Help prevent blue box litter with these easy tips:

- Don’t overfill your blue box.
- Crush lightweight containers, don’t bag containers (they must be loose for sorting).
- Contain loose paper in a grocery bag and put the bag into the paper and plastic bag blue box.
- Secure all plastic bottles into one bag, tie firmly shut and put that into the paper and plastic bag blue box.
- Stack the blue boxes: Put the heavier paper box on top of the container box.
- Write your name on all your blue boxes in permanent marker so you can identify them if they blow down the street.
- One resident suggests that if your blue box is missing, follow the wind trail, and when retrieving it, please lend a hand and scoop up some wind blown recyclables with it.

**Help educate our water protectors**

Every spring, the Waterloo Wellington Children’s Groundwater Festival hosts 5,000 elementary students at the Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum to learn about water.

As a not-for-profit, the festival relies on volunteers and donations. The five-day festival requires over 500 volunteers – high school students and adults – to run 50 hands-on activities. Bussing, tent rentals and supplies are just some of the costs.

This year’s festival will be May 24 to May 30. If you can help educate our future water protectors by volunteering or making a financial donation, contact the Festival at www.wwgf.com.

**Wrong items in the blue box can affect the recyclability of ALL the materials**

**Biosolids Strategy**

The Region of Waterloo’s Biosolids Strategy also earned another honour last fall: the Visual Engagement Award by the International Association of Public Participation. Since 2014, the Region has been asking the community “When was the last time you thought about what happens after you flush?” A highly visual campaign has included infographics, colouring books and short, informative videos featuring science journalist Bob McDonald. That created conversations and feedback that shaped the Region’s sustainable long-term biosolids strategy. Together with the community, the Region will continue to explore innovative ways to recover resources. Learn more at www.regionofwaterloo.ca/biosolids.

**What should we do with all that water?**

It’s how much Wilfrid Laurier University saves each day after making upgrades in 22 buildings across campus. That’s equal to the average daily water use of 308 people! Former Region of Waterloo Chair Ken Seiling honoured Laurier’s big investment in sustainability with a Water Efficiency Excellency Award last fall.

These water conservation improvements were done in partnership with the Region’s WET (Water Efficient Technology) Program, which provides rebates and resources to help businesses and institutions become more water efficient.

“WLU was very proactive and installed hundreds of water efficient fixtures across many buildings,” said Wayne Brabazon, water efficiency technologist. “It was a great project that achieved immediate and sustainable water savings.”

**Raising awareness**

Environews - Spring 2019

- **Environews - Spring 2019**
- **Waste Whiz**
- **Check out what goes where:**
  - Ask the Waste Whiz on our website www.regionofwaterloo.ca/waste.
  - Download the My Waste app. Check how to recycle an item or set up reminders for your collection day.

- **Recycling**
  - The first step to recycling is to sort your garbage into proper boxes: garbage, green bin, blue box, and special collection.
  - Your garbage goes directly to a regional landfill, and your green bin is taken to a local composting facility where it becomes a valuable organic fertilizer for local farms.
  - Blue boxes contain recyclable materials and are sent to Ontario mines where they rehabilitate damaged soil to help plants grow.
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- **Helping out**
  - The Region was named a “Utility of the Future” by the Water Environment Federation for its biosolids work. This award recognized the Region for finding new ways to treat wastewater and reused resources. Those changes are making a big impact on our wastewater system’s long-term sustainability.

- **In the past, for example, methane gas produced in the treatment process was simply burned off. Now the Region is planning to capture this green energy to power treatment equipment, which saves electricity and greenhouse gas emissions.**

- **Another example is the biosolids, which are now reused to provide important nutrients for local farmers’ fields and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.**

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Waste: Get involved

Decluttering? Use our drop-off recycle programs

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) depot: HHW includes paint, cleaners, yard chemicals and batteries. Don’t put these in the garbage. Keep them in their original containers and bring them to the HHW depot at either of our sites. Limit of 25 litres.

Goodwill Industries: Reuse clothing, toys and housewares. Drop them off at Gate 2, Waterloo site.

Habitat for Humanity: Drop-off home building items that can be reused. Gate 2, Waterloo site.

Bicycle recycle, motor oil and oil filter recycle, cooking oil recycle; find more free drop-off recycle programs on our website, www.regionofwaterloo.ca/waste. Also check out the Reduce and Reuse Directory to find options for many other household items.

Cambridge site: 201 Savage Drive
Waterloo site: 925 Erb Street West, Gate 2

Residential drop-off hours:
Monday to Saturday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The Only Cure for Litter is You
Join the 20 Minute Makeover litter cleanup on Friday, April 26 or find other events on www.curelitter.ca. Get Involved page.

We used less salt this winter
Is your business ready for a new approach to winter? The Region can help at www.regionofwaterloo.ca/winterplan

Taking a new approach to a problem can be challenging. This past winter, businesses in our community did just that by supporting the Salting Shift program.

Using the Region’s Salting Shift signs, businesses closed unneeded areas such as extra stairs and walkways and outdoor patios. Closing areas reduces the amount of surface that needs to be salted, which helps protect our community’s drinking water.

Thank you for helping to protect our water!
• Cambridge City Hall, Cambridge
• Centre in the Square, Kitchener
• Corporation Square, Kitchener
• Region of Waterloo, Kitchener
• St. Jerome’s University, Waterloo
• St. Peter’s Lutheran Church, Kitchener
• Sunnyside Supportive Housing, Kitchener
• Sunrise Shopping Centre, Kitchener
• The Boardwalk at Ira Needles Blvd., Waterloo
• The Hamilton Family Theatre, Cambridge
• Waterloo City Hall, Waterloo

Residents follow conservation by-law
As summer warms up, we can all do our part to avoid stress on the Region’s water supply. Please follow the Region of Waterloo’s water conservation rules, in effect from May 31 to Sept 30. Every resident and business has one day per week to use a hose or sprinkler for watering lawns. Watering hours are between 5:30 and 10 a.m., or 7 and 11 p.m.

Watering by hand with a watering can or rain barrel is allowed any day of the week! And if you need to change your watering day or need extra water for new grass, call us at 519-575-4400.