**Annual Awards Dinner 2015**

By Lynda Schnecklof

The Sierra Club Niagara Group is holding its Annual Awards Dinner on Thursday, April 30th 2015. Each year, the Sierra Club Niagara Group holds an annual dinner to celebrate the work that has been accomplished that year, presenting awards to those individuals and organizations that have made a significant contribution to environmental efforts, and listening to invited guests who can expand our understanding of the issues.

This year we will hear from Erin Heaney, Executive Director of the Clean Air Coalition, an organization that builds power by developing grassroots leaders, ensuring recyclable items don’t end up in the trash.

The Blake Reeves Award, given in honor of the founder of the Niagara Group of the Sierra Club, recognizes an organizational effort to further environmental causes. This year we are delighted to give this award to the Buffalo Public Schools for the Solar Schools Program. We particularly recognize Paul McDonnell, Director of Facilities Planning and Design, Jason McCarthy of the School Board, and Rick Steinberg, the Sierra Club Member who has worked for over four years to get this program designed and contracted.

To learn more about the Sierra Club visit the website (http://sierraclub.org) or call Larry at 716-634-8715. We look forward to seeing you!

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**The Trailblazer**

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**The Niagara County’s CWM Siting Board Meeting Announcement**

By Charles Lamb

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Siting Board will hold issues conference meetings with presiding Law Judge James T. McClymonds to hear expert testimony regarding the permit application to build a new Chemical Waste Management landfill in Niagara County. The DEC has stated that another hazardous waste landfill is not necessary, but a permit could be granted if it is shown that this would be in the public interest. Gary Abraham, representing Town of Lewiston and Niagara County Legislature, Nils Olsen, representing Residents for Responsible Government, and Amy Wityrowski, Lewiston resident will offer evidence in opposition to this expansion. Beginning April 28 through May 1, (with the option of meeting the May 5 through 8 if necessary), the meetings will be held from 8 am to 6 pm at Youngstown First Presbyterian Church (100 Church Street, Youngstown) in the Fellowship Hall. The public may attend and is encouraged to support public disagreement to this application. The Siting Board may make a decision on this issue later this year.

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P.O. Box 1127
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For more news, archives, and upcoming events, visit...
NiagaraSierraClub.com

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**RECYCLING CORNER**

**METALS: How It works and why you need to know!**

By Ron Missel

Simply put, recycling is a process to turn useful waste materials into new products. But it also has a big impact on the environment. For one, keeping items out of the waste stream reduces the pollution from both landfill run-off and airborne incinerator residue, which are major delivery systems for solid waste disposal. Further, the amount of raw materials needed to produce new products is also reduced, as is the additional energy expended to harvest them. Lastly, the overall reduction in energy consumption resulting from recycling lowers greenhouse gas emissions and the corresponding impact on climate change.

The number of items and materials that can be recycled is constantly growing due to improved collection, sorting, production, and remanufacturing processes. This is great news for the environment, not to mention our health. However, it requires all of us to be more diligent when loading up the recycle tote to prevent recyclable items from ending up in the trash – and that will happen if we violate some of the basic rules.

Here’s what we need to know:

Today, ‘Single Stream’ recycling is predominant. All paper, cardboard, cans, bottles, and containers are placed into the same curbside recycle tote, picked up by your neighborhood’s recycling crew, and delivered to a remanufacturing facility. Placing newspaper in brown paper bags would seem a better option but brown paper bags are filled with cardboard, not paper. Newspapers, then, should be placed in the tote. Cardboard boxes need to be flattened, staples removed, and then cut into 24 x 36 square sections to ensure proper separation at the sorting facility. Food and drink containers must be emptied and rinsed to avoid eventual contamination at the remanufacturing facility. (Place the plastic caps back on the drink containers. Otherwise, they’re too small to pass through the conveyor systems and will be discarded.)

The thing that can happen is to recycle with all good intentions only to discover that many items are being disposed of in the trash.

Here’s how it works:

Once the recycle load is dumped at the sorting facility, the contents are moved to a massive conveyor system. Along the way, materials are separated by star screens, weight, infrared lasers, optical readers, normal and reverse magnets, forced air, and always a bevy of humans plucking items off the line that shouldn’t be there. When sorting is completed, items are baled by category – plastics, cardboard, paper, metal – and then sold as a commodity on the open market. (To fully understand this process, take a look at the SINGLE STREAM processing video on the Modern Corporation website. [It’s an amazing process!] http://www.moderncorporation.com)

What happens if a recycle tote is contaminated or improperly loaded? For one, the entire tote can be left behind at your home to be picked up later by the trash truck. Or, the tote contents may be placed on the recycle truck, but certain items plucked off the conveyor at the sorting facility and disposed of. Both trash and recycle collection is a business with responsibilities spelled out in lengthy contracts between the hauler and the municipality. In Single Stream contracts, the crew is generally not obligated to sort items curbside. Tagging the tote for a violation is more likely to occur, but only if written into the signed contract. Remember, too, that baled recyclables are sold as a commodity, revenue generated ultimately reduces the municipal expenditures required for trash pick-up. The onus is on each of us to get it right!

What do we need to pay attention to when placing items in the recycle tote? Tying newspaper with string or placing newspapers and other items in plastic shopping bags is a major violation. Both string and bags jam up and shut down the conveyor systems. Placing newspaper in brown paper bags would seem a better option but brown paper bags are filled with cardboard, not paper. Newspapers, then, should be placed in the tote. Cardboard boxes need to be flattened, staples removed, and then cut into 24 x 36 square sections to ensure proper separation at the sorting facility. Food and drink containers must be emptied and rinsed to avoid eventual contamination at the remanufacturing facility. (Place the plastic caps back on the drink containers. Otherwise, they’re too small to pass through the conveyor systems and will be discarded.)

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Not everything can be recycled; cardboard, not paper. Newspapers, then, should be placed in the tote. Cardboard boxes need to be flattened, staples removed, and then cut into 24 x 36 square sections to ensure proper separation at the sorting facility. Food and drink containers must be emptied and rinsed to avoid eventual contamination at the remanufacturing facility. (Place the plastic caps back on the drink containers. Otherwise, they’re too small to pass through the conveyor systems and will be discarded.)

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U.S. Postage Paid
Buffalo, NY
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The Solar Home Companion show came to Buffalo!
By Joani Hyman

On March 1, the Sierra Club Niagara Group was proud to co-sponsor the Solutions Grassroots tour, “Solar Home Companion,” on a Sunday evening at the Buffalo History Museum. Josh Fox (Oscar-nominated and Emmy winning film maker and activist), Zephyr Teachout (Fordham Law school professor and former gubernatorial candidate) and her team presented an informative, motivating and entertaining program. While offering information about climate change, the program was interspersed with musical entertainment. Perusing his banjo, Josh invoked the spirit of Pete Seeger with a story of meeting him in person in recent years. He reminded us of Pete’s numerous successful campaigns and how, fueled by his irreplaceable energy, he invited ordinary people to join him in standing up to causes of justice and protection of the earth. Josh’s accomplished banjo playing echoed Pete’s eloquent message that facing opponents of seemingly intractable power is not a reason to be defeatist or grim. We can all enjoy the songs, and sing along when invited; we can all find action to take.

The urgency of the current environmental crises requires many forms of communication if there is to be any hope of successful response to the climate crisis. People need to be informed of the facts and of the possibility of being part of urgent and essential change. People need to understand that mainstream media frequently does not truthfully communicate the most relevant facts. Most of all, people need to embrace the power of communication to increase the potential of grassroots action.

Zephyr Teachout spoke eloquently about the history of people power and celebrated New York’s impressive success in securing Governor Cuomo’s ban on fracking. She reminded us of the power of persistence, pointed out the part “bird-dogging” played, and of the need to continue.

The Solar Home Companion used many forms of communication — the fabulous songs performed by Dustin Hamman, a preview of some beautiful and moving parts of Josh’s new film on pressing climate change issues, energizing comments by Lee Ziesche, an experienced grassroots organizer, and the presentation of Tim Woodcock, who shared concrete, technical information on the current use of renewable energy and the potential for exponentially increasing use.

The Solutions Grassroots Tour has partnered with Ethical Electric, which provides 100% renewable power. Anyone with an electric bill can sign up at Ethicaelectrical.com or by phone at 1-800-460-4900. Alternatively, you can purchase renewable energy from Energy Cooperative of America 1-800-422-1475 or (716) 580-3506.

Sierra Club Niagara Group (Niagarasierraclub.com) has many projects addressing many facets of the climate crisis. You are invited to continue the momentum of change by joining us to learn about Energy Initiative — sponsoring or attending hourly events to spread the word about how everyone can be a part of the People’s Climate March, learning about many other ways to be part of the change.

Volunteer Opportunities for SC Niagara Group Members

HELP WITH TABLING NEEDED: The SC Niagara Group has the opportunity to participate at various events this year and is looking for volunteers to help “people the tables”. A wonderful form of “grassroots” communication, a way to meet the public and let them know that we have a group right here in WNY. It may involve such activities as handing out SC folders to the tables. Tabling is a wonderful form of communication to increase the potential of grassroots action.

Sierra Club has no real opportunity for our representation to express our concerns. The hearing amounted to a “weak opportunity” — one year “to allow public input”. Since the public was given one week’s notice of the hearing this last winter to the Public Service Commission, the hearing was a monstrosity where Jobe Mose drilled the first commercial oil well in New York State. Most of those wells have been closed and the forests have had one hundred years to grow back.

Allegany sits on top of the Marcellus slate. Not long ago, gas exploration companies threatened to tap the shale using the destructive high volume, horizontal fracturing process. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation threatened with a law that “unsanctioned” any park mineral rights that were not claimed within two years. No claims were made in that timeframe.

Six years ago, a new master plan for the Allegany Park permanently outlawed any gas or oil exploration within its boundaries. But Allegany was left with 9000 of its acres, north of France Brook Road, still marred by the presence of National Fuel roads and well-heads cutting up land. The Solar Home Companion show pointed out the potential of electric service to provide us with 100% renewable energy as your electric service provider.

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