

SO. FREDERICK COUNTY ROTARIAN FEATURED IN ROTARIAN MAGAZINE

“WASTE NOT, WANT NOT”

By Hank Sartin, *Rotarian Magazine*, January 2020

As the owner of a summer camp, Joe Richardson has long been dedicated to environmental issues. The Bar-T Mountainside Challenge & Retreat Center and Summer Camp in Maryland runs on solar and geothermal energy; composting toilets save water. Richardson also runs afterschool programs that include opportunities to learn about environmental issues. So when a teacher at a local high school asked him to help start a program to stop food waste from ending up in landfills, Richardson, a member of the Rotary Club of Southern Frederick County (Urbana), Maryland, seized the opportunity. He knew a lot about the logistics of garbage, having served on a special commission of Frederick County focused on the county's waste stream. He combined all his knowledge and developed a program at Urbana High School to keep "Lunch Out of Landfills" that has rapidly expanded to other schools around Frederick County.

THE ROTARIAN: Why is it important to keep food waste out of landfills?

RICHARDSON: When you bury organics, they generate methane, which is a greenhouse gas. And there are transport costs for trash. We've reduced the amount of trash hauled to landfills.

TR: How serious a problem is food waste in school cafeterias?

RICHARDSON: It's eye-popping. Before our program, Urbana Elementary School produced about



210 pounds of trash a day. More than 100 pounds of that was food, and 40 to 50 pounds of it was liquids. So we are diverting 70 percent of the trash by disposing of organics and liquids in separate receptacles - and that's before we separate out the recyclables.

TR: In expanding the program, you focused on elementary schools. Why?

RICHARDSON: In high schools, you have to break habits ingrained for 10 years. But by the time our fifth graders are in high school, they will see sorting waste as simply what you do.

TR: How did your Rotary club get involved?

RICHARDSON: We wanted to broaden the program but couldn't get funding. My club contributed to keep the program going for a year. Then other Rotary clubs raised \$20,000 to fund an expansion to more schools for this year. But I don't want Rotary clubs to pay for this. The money that is saved on dumpster pickups can then go to paying for the organics removal.

TR: What have you learned since you started the program?

RICHARDSON: You can't set up the program and walk away. Rotarians and other people volunteer in cafeterias the first few weeks, helping kids to throw things into the right bins. But then you have to monitor the contamination of the waste stream. Serious contamination with things such as plastic straws in the organic waste bin becomes a deal-breaker for the composting companies. You have to get the principal and building services to buy in. You have to have a place to take

the organic waste for composting. If you don't have all of that lined up, it's hard to get started.

TR: Does the program help students recognize food waste as a problem?

RICHARDSON: The kids certainly are aware. I was visiting a school to check on the program. In the office I heard a parent ask, "What's going on in this school? My daughter yelled at me for throwing a banana peel in the trash." I'm over-hearing all this and thinking, I want to give that kid a high-five.

SMOKETOWN ROTARY FEATURED IN BRUNSWICK CITIZEN

By Dick Foot, *Rotary Club of Carroll Creek*

The Smoketown Rotary Club was the lead sponsor of the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation's Mobile Science Lab for the Lab's week-long presence at Brunswick Elementary School. Rotarians served as classroom aides throughout the week. This was the third year the Smoketown Rotary Club organized this educational program, which was financially-seeded three years ago by the Rotary Club of Carroll Creek, the Smoketown Rotary Club's sponsor club, when the Smoketown Rotary Club was a Satellite club of Carroll Creek.

Monthly the Smoketown Rotary Club hosts a Fellowship evening at the local Smoketown Brew Station, thanks to Smoketown Rotarian David Blackmon, owner of the brew station. For the second month, the Smoketown Rotary Club invited members of Brunswick Main Street and the Greater Brunswick Area Chamber of Commerce to join in the fellowship.