

SSAFE Newsletter

Senior Stewards Acting for the Environment



In This Issue

Focus on Plastics

Our first issue takes aim on plastics and solutions from personal to legislative.

All About SSAFE

We are Green, Gray and not Going Away.

Elders in Action

News and success stories from seniors making a difference.

Interested in learning more?

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SSAFE newsletters can always be found at [SSAFE.org/newsletter](https://ssafe.org/newsletter)



Plastics, Plastics, Everywhere!

*From Ruth Crawford, SSAFE Newsletter Editor
Cartmel at Kendal-Crosslands Communities*

Walk down any store aisle and you see almost nothing but plastic. Plastic jars, plastic jugs, plastic bottles, plastic bags, plastic wrap—the list is almost endless. Since the first plastic was synthesized, this convenient, lightweight, break-resistant material has become the default choice for many goods producers, and its manufacture is still on the increase. Yet it has quickly overcome our environment and exceeded our ability to manage it.

cont'd p.3

Introducing SSAFE

*From Larry Daloz, SSAFE Education Project Team Leader
Kendal at Hanover*



Senior Stewards Acting for the Environment (SSAFE) was founded in 2019.

Our mission is to create a model for empowering elders in Continuing Care Retirement Communities across the US to lend their time, social capital, financial resources, and unique lived experiences to the broader US climate movement. To that end SSAFE supports and encourages each Kendal affiliate to advocate for climate-friendly policies, to reduce our carbon footprint, and to educate our staff, residents, and the public about the urgency of the climate crisis. Our members come from multiple Kendal communities up and down the east coast and as far west as Chicago. Our website was launched in April of 2021, and this newsletter has closely followed. Its goal is to spread the word about global warming and to encourage people to take personal actions to mitigate the resultant climate change.

What can you expect in this first issue? Plastics recycling is a major problem and there is much misinformation about it. The good news is that innovative programs have been initiated at some Kendal affiliates that have helped expand the opportunities for recycling various types of plastic. We hope these stories will spark some ideas for you to try at your facility.

We hope you enjoy our inaugural issue. And please let us know what you would like to see in future issues of the newsletter.

“It is time for us to recognize our roles as elders by calling on our colleagues to step up with us, teaching and learning together, and making a more hopeful future for those who will come after us.”

— Larry Daloz, SSAFE Education Project Team Leader



Plastics (cont'd)

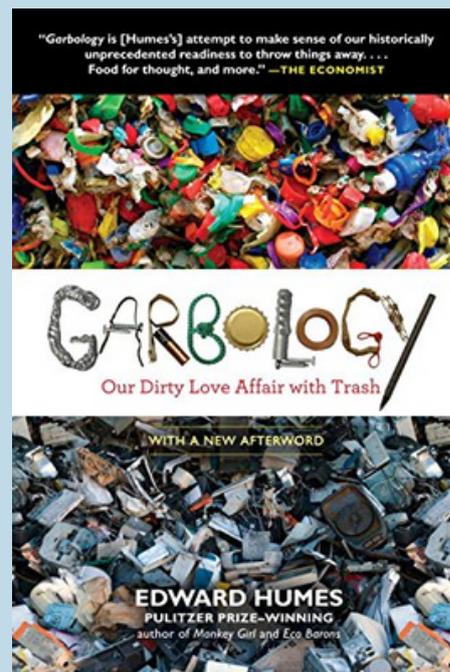
It's expected that there will be more plastic than fish in our oceans by 2050. And as our oceans and rivers toss mounds of plastic about, it breaks down into microplastic—tiny shredded particles that never biodegrade and can invade the entire ecosystem. Fish, other sea creatures and birds eat this tiny toxic plastic and become sick or die.

It's not just oceans that house mounds of plastic. It's literally everywhere—in our high-tech electronics, healthcare equipment and supplies, airbags, power plants, transformers, undersea cables, in our clothes, in our water supply. Look around and it's hard not to see plastic.

A PBS NewsHour special, "The Plastic Problem," aired on November 27, 2019 (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/series/the-plastic-problem>), and their Frontline special, "Plastics Wars," aired on March 31, 2020 (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/plastic-wars/>). Even more recently *YES!* magazine devoted its entire Summer 2021 issue to exploring the problems and solutions surrounding plastic pollution (<https://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/solving-plastic>). Just as plastic itself is everywhere, so is media attention to this monumental and ever-growing threat to animal and human health.

In addition to threatening health through pollution, creating plastic in the first place causes greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming. That's because plastic is made from fossil fuels. It is a petrochemical, an inexpensive byproduct of oil and gas production. Burning fossil fuel, whether it's to produce energy or to make plastic, has the same damaging effect on the earth's atmosphere.

Recommended Reading



Plastic Waste Quiz

1. How many millions of tons of food packaging are dumped in landfills each year?
 - a) 2 million
 - b) 5 million
 - c) 10 million
2. What % of plastics in the US actually gets recycled?
 - a) 1%
 - b) 10%
 - c) 40%
3. _____ plastic water bottles will be used *once* and then thrown away?
 - a) Over 100 million
 - b) Just under 250 million
 - c) 1.4 billion
4. How many pounds of plastic waste end up in the ocean each year?
 - a) 18 billion pounds
 - b) 18 thousand square miles
 - c) Enough to fill 18 sports stadiums

Answers on page 11.

cont'd p.4

Plastics (cont'd)

In fact, it's the oil and gas industry that has spearheaded the increased manufacturing of plastic, largely to fill the packaging needs of huge multinational corporations like Coca Cola, PepsiCo and Unilever. The more we consumers accept products in single-use plastic, the more we drive the problem. These packaging giants have successfully shifted the responsibility for managing the mounting toll of plastic from their shoulders to ours by positioning recycling as the solution - *individual* recycling.

The sad fact, however, is that only about 9% of all plastics ever get recycled. Plastics recycling is complex and surrounded by confusion. There are many different types of plastic, some more easily recyclable than others. A lot of packaging, products, articles of clothing, have multiple types of plastic components which cannot be separated out to recycle and therefore end up in a landfill.

There is still hope on the recycling front, however, and we're starting to see on a small scale some innovative approaches to the plastics problem. There is the "zero waste movement" in which products are made available online or in stores in refillable containers. There are fix-it shops that encourage broken products to be repaired and reused rather than become refuse. More grocery stores are selling items that don't have plastic packaging. In the case of #1 plastics (PET), new technologies are being developed that allow true recycling of a plastic product into another plastic product without having to add more plastics for stability.

And in this issue of the SSAFE newsletter, we report on some recycling success stories we hope you find interesting. They just might spark some thoughts about actions you can take at your Kendal community. After all, it is the cumulative efforts of all of us that can mobilize others and help pave the way for a better future.



Kendal Elders in Action

Going Green in Dining Operations

From Mike Burke, Kendal at Collington

When the pandemic hit, the dining experience was completely upended at Kendal at Collington. We went from sit-down service on china tableware to delivery via Styrofoam™ food containers.

Styrofoam™ is a type of plastic known as extruded polystyrene foam. It's a puffed up #6 plastic, in fact, and is made from oil. Like all plastic, Styrofoam™ does not degrade and is a major cause of environmental pollution.

To lessen the environmental impact, Hospitality Director Christian Ramsey searched for vendors that sold sustainable containers. He found his answer at [GreenPaper Products™](#).

The company produces dinner-size clamshell containers that are plant-based and petroleum free, biodegradable and compostable in commercial composting operations. GreenPaper's plant fiber blend containers are made with wheat straw and wood fiber. The wheat is grown within 20 miles of the manufacturing facility. And best of all, the company uses carbon offsets to offer carbon-neutral shipping on all Collington orders. The containers are microwave safe.

While paper and plant-based food containers are a big improvement over their plastic counterparts, they are still single-use containers. With our residents and staff now largely vaccinated, we are returning to pre-pandemic life. That means we can do away with the clamshells entirely. Those heavy china dinnerware plates and coffee cups that get used over-and-over again are the real environmental champs.



The Landing, one of two dining areas for Kendal at Collington.

GreenPaper Products™ is hardly alone in offering sustainable food packaging. Oak PLUS™ is a competitor offering a sugarcane byproduct called bagasse as its clamshell product. It is 100 percent compostable as well. EcoProducts™ offers paper-based food containers, making them both recyclable as well as compostable.

There are many more brands now offering biodegradable alternatives to plastic. The Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) certifies which containers qualify as truly biodegradable.



One of the many biodegradable products from GreenPaper Products™

How to Divert 500 Pounds of Plastic Film from the Landfill

From Anita James, Kendal at Lexington

Most of us habitually recycle and feel grateful that our plastic gets reused in some form. However, we all know that certain types of plastics cannot just be thrown in the recycling bin. So, what to do with all those bags, wrappings, and package air pillows?



Kendal at Lexington has found an innovative solution—the TREX® Challenge! Ever hear of TREX® decks, railings, and benches? Well they're made from plastic film packaging that usually ends up in the trash. Universities, schools, and yes, communities like Kendal, can all participate in collecting certain types of plastics and depositing them at local participating grocery stores for delivery to TREX® (<https://recycle.trex.com/>).

How did Kendal at Lexington become involved in this program? It was a multi-step process spearheaded by Anita James, Convenor of the Sustainability Committee. Once she was made aware of the TREX® Challenge by another member of the Sustainability Committee, she was off and running. Already familiar with existing TREX® benches, chairs, and side tables on campus, she went online to learn the details about the TREX® Challenge. It took discussions at several meetings in February, March, and April, but eventually

all on the Sustainability Committee reached consensus that the program was beneficial, doable, and worth the effort. The motivating refrain was: “500 pounds of plastic film in 6 months.”

The next step was to present the TREX® Challenge at the Residents Association Meeting in May. The Sustainability Committee recommended a soft start to the program in May, to get everyone comfortable with how it works. The official kick-off would be June 1st. With resident support behind her, Anita could now register the program on the TREX® website and get things underway.

TREX® structured this program to roll out over 6 months, to give communities enough time to gather 500 pounds of plastic film. Kendal at Lexington would have until November 30th to meet their goal.

When the goal is met, you get a reward: TREX® will give you a bench made from recycled plastic. Of course, the real reward is the plastic film diverted from the landfill.



cont'd p.7

How to Divert 500 Pounds of Plastic Film from the Landfill (cont'd)

Anita started by placing 2 recycling containers in the facility—one in the main building near the bulletin boards and the other outside in a pergola near some cottages. She bought hers locally, but TREX® does make bins available upon request. Educational and promotional materials to help engage participants are also available on their website.

By the end of June, over 100 pounds of plastic film had been collected—and this just from the residents!

Wouldn't it be great if the staff were involved also? That's exactly what happened. Anita talked with people in HR, Operations, Housekeeping, Maintenance, and Food Services, among others, and was able to present the program in person at some all-staff meetings in June. As a result, the program could now really expand!

Anita bought 4 more recycling containers—placing one each in the staff break room, the nursing center, the maintenance building, and a big 96-gallon bin by the loading dock. It was decided that the staff would place the first reward bench, as a thank-you for their participation. Some organizations donate their bench to a non-profit—always an option.

With buy-in from residents and staff, Kendal at Lexington is off to a highly successful start.



Anita James from Kendal at Lexington sorting plastic film at a community recycling event; a win-win for both parties.

If you would like further information about how to implement a similar program at your Kendal, please email Anita James at james@ohio.edu. She would be happy to share her experience.

It Takes a Team

1. Volunteers check bin fullness daily
2. TREX® Challenge leader . . .
 - Empties the bins when full
 - Weighs the plastic film collected
 - Takes bags to a participating store
 - Records weight on TREX® Challenge website



Bob Bradish from Kendal at Lexington collecting plastic film.

Changes You Can Make in Your Everyday Lives

From Cindy Rand, Kendal at Hanover

We all know of the devastating impact that plastic has on our planet. Here is a collection of small actions we can take to help counter that impact:

Avoid using plastic straws.

Use steel or bamboo. Keep one in the car.

Avoid accepting plastic utensils with a takeaway meal.

Use your own or buy a reusable bamboo set.

Keep a set in the car too!



What do you do with all those emptied green or black round plastic flower pots? **The nursery where you purchased the plants may take them back. Home Depot will take back used pots.**

Ready to break out the party balloons? Think again—balloons are one of the top threats to marine and terrestrial wildlife, breaking down into food lookalikes and tangling and strangling others with strings. The vast majority are not biodegradable. In addition, foil balloons account for many power outages. **Use alternatives such as pompoms, plants, candles, flowers and pinwheels—let's be creative!**

Stop using liquid hand soap.

It is good to know that bar soap is made from animal fat or plant oils, and most liquid soap is petroleum-based. Both are equally effective as cleaning agents, **but bar soaps contain fewer chemicals. Bar soap costs less, and uses 5 times less energy to produce and 20 times less energy for packaging.**

We continue to advocate for the reduction of plastic, but bottled water remains a significant problem. Here are reasons to **ditch the plastic and go with town water in a reusable container.**

- Many companies are simply filtering municipal water and bottling it, and sometimes the source is unknown.
- Bottled water is over a thousand times more expensive.
- Research found that bottled water contained about 50% more microplastics than tap water.
- Bottled water testing is less stringent and not mandatory, but town water testing is required to meet EPA standards and has consumer scrutiny.
- Bottling, packaging and transportation, as well as disposal (only a small fraction of bottles are recycled), create a wide range of adverse impacts on the environment.

Get in the habit of filling up your reusable container ahead of time so it's "grab 'n go" ready!

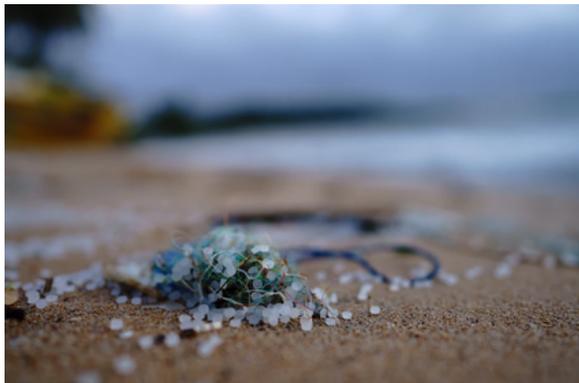


What can you reuse?

Look for reusable items at home first. If you would like ideas or to shop eco-friendly products, try www.netzerocompany.com

Did you know?

Tiny Plastic is a Big Problem



Plastic waste tends to break down into small particles called microplastics. Chesapeake Bay scientists are finding microplastics in the Bay and its rivers. A 2014 study of four tributaries found microplastics in 59 of 60 samples of various marine animals. A year later every sample contained microplastics. Today it's estimated that humans are ingesting a credit card's worth of microplastics every week!

Plastic bags and water bottles are among the largest sources of these wastes. So be sure to take your reusable cloth bag to the store and use tap water when you're thirsty. (Source: Bay Journal)

From Mike Burke, Kendal at Collington

“Ban the Bag” Success Grows

That horrible plastic bag—see it hanging from a tree limb? See it littering the hillside? It strangles sea creatures when it ends up in our oceans. It snags recycling equipment when it's thrown into the recycling bin. And it burdens landfills, where it never biodegrades.

Fortunately, a movement is growing to ban the bag. Several states—and some counties and cities—have had legislative success in preventing large retail stores from offering plastic bags to their customers.

8 States that have Plastic Bag Bans

- California (first)—2014
- Hawaii (second)—2015
- New York (third)—2019
- Maine—2019
- Connecticut—2019
- Oregon—2019
- Vermont—2019
- Delaware—2019



New Jersey will ban the bag effective May, 2022, with some of the toughest legislation yet. Some additional states are looking at imposing fees or taxes to curtail use of the plastic bag. Whether it's a ban or a fee, legislative actions abounded starting in 2019, and there's every expectation of more of the same to come.

*From Ruth Crawford, SSAFE Newsletter Editor
Cartmel at Kendal-Crosslands Communities*

Puzzle for the Planet

Word Search: Break out your pens and pencils and see if you can find the climate concepts hidden in this word search!

By Ben James, Kendal at Crosslands

Climate Change

R M A S S T R A N S I T G O E D U I R H
H L R H S E W E D R A C C I R T C E L E
L T H G U O R D S E N A C I R R U H Q A
Q B N O E D I X O I D N O B R A C R N T
L E E V P O U L S O Y R E U R R U R E P
L C L N P C T E R G L I S L A C H E F U
E T E E R O R S S S E F T S T T C I O M
C E O S N I P S R A N E T O T I O C S P
R R D F F O T B A G R R E C U C S A S H
A E H Y D R O E L E C T R I C T T L I Y
L R T A I T S E E S N H M T A H M G L R
O E S S E L L F F U N G E E R A H E F E
S E D L O C A L F O O D T N E W R T R T
H L E B Y R N H I H M A S C A N A O E T
A T B C U O F S A N D E O T A H N N E A
T I E C I L Y A I E M A E C I Y T D I B
H R S L G R B O M E D R N S M A N E E D
I M R A L E R S O R O O O R W I D N M I
H S R G O E I R N G E T Y A F S N T N R
W I N D T U R B I N E P N F S T I A N G

ARCTIC THAW
CARBON DIOXIDE
DROUGHT
ELECTRIC CAR
FIRES
FLOOD
FOSSIL FREE
GLACIER

GREENHOUSE GAS
GRID BATTERY
HEAT PUMP
HIGH WATER
HURRICANES
HYDROELECTRIC
LED BULBS
LESS BEEF

LOCAL FOOD
MASS TRANSIT
METHANE
PERMAFROST
RECYCLE
SOLAR CELL
WIND TURBINE

Spreading the Good News

Ideas for Sharing this Newsletter

We hope you are enjoying the first SSAFE newsletter. If you would like to grow our ranks and do a little more to support the planet, consider sharing this newsletter within your local Kendal campus.

If you print the newsletter double-sided, it will be 6 pages long. Perhaps you could print an extra copy and leave it in a community space for others to read.

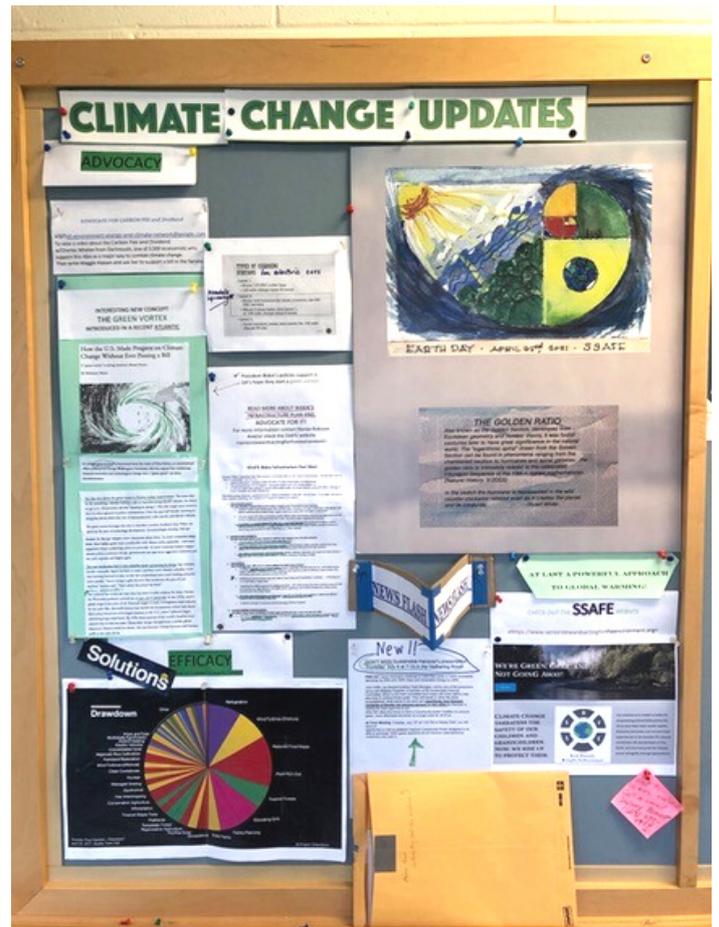
One of our favorite ideas is the creative use of a community bulletin board. Mary Ann Cadwallader from Kendal at Hanover designed the climate change bulletin board display shown on the right. She utilizes an envelope for handouts.

The URL to find a printable PDF copy of this newsletter can be found at "www.SSAFE.org/newsletter". If you prefer not to print the entire newsletter, you could print just the first page and circle the URL on the bottom left to highlight it for others.

Remembering a short URL like "SSAFE.org/newsletter" is easy to mention to residents in passing. Note that you do not need the "www", say "Go to SSAFE.org/newsletter."

Another way to reach more residents is to forward the original newsletter email you receive.

You may discover additional ways to distribute the SSAFE newsletter. Write to info@ssafe.org and let us know!



From Mary Ann Cadwallader, Kendal at Hanover

Answers to our Garbage Quiz on Page 3:

1: c - *10 million tons* of food packaging are dumped into landfills each year.

2: b - This percentage varies but on average *10% or less* of plastics are actually recycled.

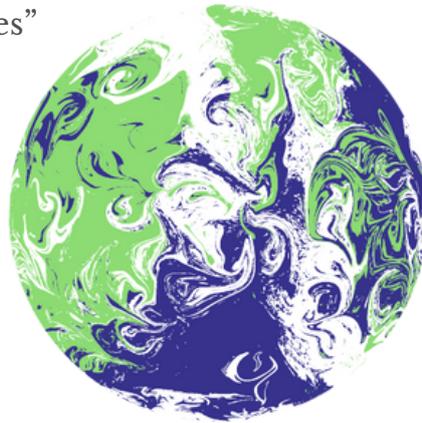
3: c - *1.4 billion* plastic water bottles are used and tossed each year.

4: a - *18 billion pounds* of plastic waste end up in the ocean each year.

Wrapping Up

Looking Forward

In November 2021, COP26, the 26th annual UN Conference of Parties will be held in Glasgow, Scotland. The “parties” refers to the 197 signatories of the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) in the treaty of 1994. These parties have promoted the climate change cause ever since. In fact, the noted Paris Agreement was signed at COP21 in 2015.



UN Climate Change
Conference UK 2021

Now the UK is working with every nation once again to reach agreement on how to tackle climate change. Joining the national parties will be tens of thousands of negotiators, government representatives, businesses and citizens for 12 days of talks.

The Goals of COP26

1. Secure global net zero carbon emissions by mid-century
2. Hold temperature rise to 1.5°C
3. Unleash the corporate financing required to power the world to net zero emissions
4. Harness collective agreement to deliver on net zero commitments

For more information, go to: ukcop26.org

Submissions & Comments

We want your feedback! We’re always looking for good stories to provide inspiration to other Kendal residents. Have you been involved in an innovative program related to climate change at your Kendal? Do you have comments about this newsletter and the direction you would like to see future newsletters take?

We’d love to hear from you—drop us an email at info@SSAFE.org!

SSAFE Newsletter

This newsletter is published quarterly by the SSAFE Education Team.

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