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Contact
Bob Mazzone
(203) 406-3303

What Would You Do With One Million Plastic Bottle Caps?

In an Unprecedented Achievement, Stamford (CT) Students Have an Answer

Stamford, CT – Middle school students in the Long Island Sound coastal city of Stamford, Connecticut have done what no one has ever done before: They collected one million plastic bottle caps to prevent tons of plastic from ever reaching Long Island Sound. And now their plastic has been upcycled into a useful product for the community. That product, a countertop dish rack made entirely of plastic bottle caps was presented to the students today in an assembly at the Rogers International School.

The Problem

Students are well aware of the problems caused by mismanaged plastic waste. They see it on their beaches and their playgrounds before it reaches the water. After it reaches the water, they see it under a microscope as tiny particles known as microplastics suspended in Long Island Sound water samples, hazardous to the health of animals and humans. Every middle school student in Stamford's public schools studies microplastics with SoundWaters, an environmental education organization focused on the protection of Long Island Sound.

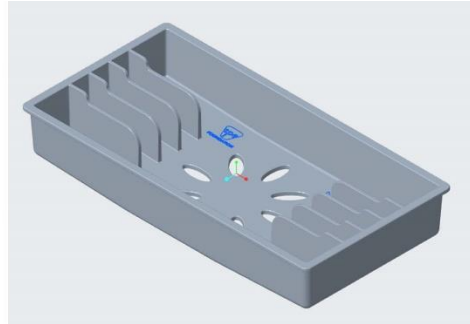
The One Million Bottle Cap Challenge

For the past three years, SoundWaters has challenged 3,600 middle school students to turn their education about microplastics into action and contribute to a solution to the local and global problem of microplastics in our water. The challenge? Collect one million plastic bottle caps to prevent them from ever reaching Long Island Sound. Despite a pandemic that affected the last three school years, Stamford middle school students, with support from thousands of students across Connecticut and beyond, have collected 2.5 million plastic bottle caps - approximately **four tons** of plastic.



What To Do with One Million Bottle Caps

The students' goal with all the plastic they collected was always to make a useful product that would return to the community. Working with the Society of Plastics Engineers and the World Design Organization, Stamford students engaged in a design challenge, competing as teams to design a useful product. The winning design, from 6th grade students at the Rogers International School, was a countertop dish rack. Additional plastic is being used to create handy plastic storage bins. Dish racks and storage bins will be distributed to all schools who participated in the Million Bottle Cap Challenge.



About the Million Bottle Cap Challenge

Conceived and conducted by SoundWaters in partnership with Stamford (CT) Public Schools, the three-year program was funded by a grant from NOAA B-WET. The program was designed for middle school students in Stamford, Connecticut and quickly engaged students from grades K-12 in schools across Connecticut and beyond. The Million Bottle Cap Challenge received tremendous support from the following companies and industry organizations: Society of Plastics Engineers, World Design Organization, Van Dyk Recycling Solutions, Ultra-Poly Corporation, Penn State Behrend, Innovative Plastics Corporation, Ampacet, Accudyn and Braskem. To learn more, visit MillionBottleCaps.org.

About SoundWaters

SoundWaters, founded in 1989, is the premier environmental education organization focused on the protection of Long Island Sound and its watershed. Annually, SoundWaters hosts shipboard and land-based programs for 32,000 children. In an era of increasing climate change, SoundWaters works in partnership with schools, communities, civic organizations, businesses and other environmental and educational organizations to develop experiences that foster a sense of responsibility for the environment and encourage actions that ensure the sustainable future of the Long Island Sound ecosystem and our planet. Please visit SoundWaters.org

About NOAA B-WET

The B-WET program is an environmental education program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that promotes place-based experiential learning for K-12 students and related professional development for teachers. B-WET fosters the growth of new, innovative programs and encourages capacity-building and environmental education partnerships.

The primary delivery of B-WET is through competitive grants that promote Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs). The MWEE is a learner-centered framework that focuses on investigations into local environmental issues and leads to informed action. Please visit NOAA.gov.

About Stamford Public Schools

SPS comprises more than 16,000 students, over 1,500 professionals, and 21 schools, including seven magnet schools and three International Baccalaureate sites. SPS has a total of 13 elementary schools, five middle schools and three high schools. The mission of the Stamford Public Schools is to provide an education that cultivates productive habits of mind, body and heart in every student.

SPS has students from many cultural backgrounds and geographic locations—as demonstrated by the more than 70 different languages spoken in the homes of families in the district. SPS offers students a learning experience rich in cultural diversity and reflective of the global society in which they will work and live.

About the Society of Plastics Engineers Foundation

The SPE Foundation supports the development of plastics professionals by funding quality educational programs, grants and scholarships emphasizing science, engineering, sustainability, and manufacturing while working to create inclusive opportunities for students around the world. The PlastiVan® program serves over 25,000 students a year changing the perception of plastics one classroom at a time by promoting sustainable practices, innovation and STEM careers in the plastics industry. Please visit 4SPE.org.

About the World Design Organization

World Design Organization (WDO)®, formerly the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (Icsid), is an international non-governmental organization founded in 1957 to promote the profession of industrial design. WDO advocates industrial design driven innovation that creates a better world, engaging more than 180 member organizations in collaborative efforts and carrying out international programming—World Design Capital®, World Design Talks™, World Design Impact Prize™, World Industrial Design Day™, and Interdesign™. WDO has United Nations Special Consultative Status. Please visit WDO.org.