



*Working together we
can become the
nation's healthiest
community.*

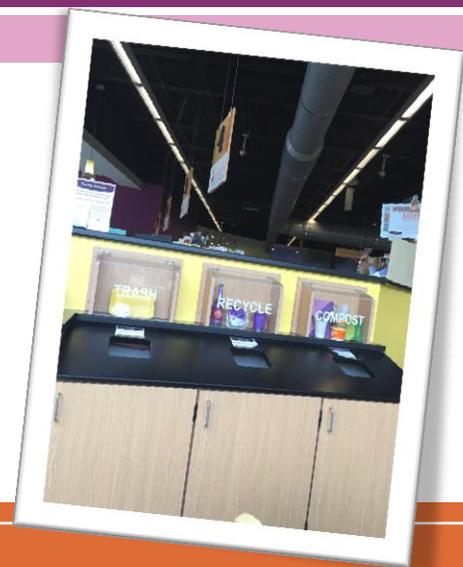


Monadnock Food Co-op

RECYCLING & COMPOSTING

CHALLENGE: Overcoming barriers to become more environmentally friendly

The Monadnock Food Co-op has been a leader in creating a culture of wellness for their staff and customers in Keene since they opened in 2013, but this year they've taken it a step further. In an effort to become more environmentally friendly, the Co-op has taken on the challenge of recycling in a town that doesn't accept a wide range of recyclables. The goal was to minimize waste and to ensure these recyclable items weren't sitting in a landfill rather than being properly recycled. In addition to improving and increasing their recycling program, the Co-op began composting, beginning with staff and then expanding to customers, to further decrease their waste. Composting can be challenging, as most people don't understand what is compostable and what is not. Trial and error has helped the store find out the best way to communicate with customers. The Co-op has created a "Green Team" to help communicate with staff, customers and to problem solve barriers that pop up in their sustainability work. This Green Team has been crucial to the sustainability projects at the Co-op.



Results

Since implementing these composting and recycling projects, the Monadnock Food Co-op has been able to decrease their dumpster size from 10 yards to 8 yards because of the minimal non-recyclable or compostable waste now produced, and have hopes to downsize even further.

SOLUTION: Explore new options

To overcome the barrier of not being able to recycle all plastics the Co-op had to look to an outside source to meet their needs. Starting in February 2016, the Co-op began sending their recyclables that are not currently accepted in Keene to a company in Connecticut called Reverse Recycling. This has allowed the Co-op to recycle all plastics #3-#7, increasing the amount of recycling being sent out and decreasing the amount of garbage significantly. They were able to do this at a minimal cost by using resources they already had.

AGNE (Associated Grocers of New England) a company that was already scheduled to go to the Co-op weekly, was able to take recycling back with them to Connecticut where it could be recycled.

A similar solution was found for composting. The Co-op was able to find a company (Triple T Trucking) to haul their compost from the store to a farm in Greenfield, MA called Martin's Farm. This has been pivotal in the Co-op's ability to compost effectively. Due to their relationship with Martin's Farm, the Co-op is able to increase their composting goals and have tried to find compostable options for most all of their disposable items, again decreasing waste.



Sustaining Success

With a passionate general manager and dedicated staff, the Co-op has been able to take on these sustainability projects and give them the attention they require. Staff have taken on roles that are necessary to achieve success. A large reason the Co-op has been successful has been the creation of a role for a Sustainability Coordinator, filled by Megan Straughen. Megan has been able to use her role to give some attention to the projects that were always a desire of the Co-op, but weren't able to be tended to, such as increasing the ability to recycle and begin composting.

“Commercial composting has been a huge success...

...for our Co-op! While we always diverted food waste from the back of the house to farmers, our partnership with Martin's Farm has allowed us to divert much more waste from the landfill. In fact, we've scaled our waste back so much that we have actually been able to get a smaller trash dumpster.”



Megan Straughen, Events, Education & Sustainability Coordinator