



Beyond Disposables: Eco-Clamshell Reusable To-Go Program

Concerned about the millions of disposable Styrofoam containers that end up in landfills after only one use, researchers at Eckerd College (Saint Petersburg, Florida), developed a reusable to-go system and container via a \$32,000 grant from the Environmental Research and Education Foundation (EREF). The project was led by Alison Ormsby, Associate Professor of Environmental Studies, and Audrey Copeland, Grant Research and Development Coordinator.



*Initial Eco-Clamshell
prototype container*

The initial prototype container for research use was created by G.E.T. Enterprises, a producer of fine quality melamine and plastic food service products. The prototype Eco-Clamshell was heat resistant, stackable, durable, had a hinged-lid and was made of BPA-free plastic.

In April of 2008 the first batch of Eco-Clamshells went into circulation at Eckerd College. Surveys conducted to gather student feedback found that while those participating in the program continued to use disposable containers on occasion, they were motivated to use the new containers because they were more environmentally friendly. Students also appreciated the sturdiness of the Eco-Clamshells. As the project progressed the Eco-Clamshell program, including a handbook describing the

implementation stages, was marketed to institutions across the country. To date, the program has been adopted by more than 100 colleges/universities, including Syracuse University, the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Virginia. The project findings show that not only does the program provide an environmentally friendly solution by minimizing food packaging waste - which is difficult to recycle, but it saves money.



*The EC-12 is one of the
most popular models*

Since the completion of the EREF-funded research project, G.E.T. Enterprises has continued to improve the design of the containers. Additional prototypes such as a soup container have been developed and the containers are now 100% leak proof. Information on G.E.T.'s latest initiatives can be found at www.ecotakeouts.com.

There are currently more than 200 accounts in the United States and Canada using the Eco-Takeouts™, including colleges/universities, corporations and healthcare facilities. In fact, use of the Eco-Takeouts™ has spread to Education City in the country of Qatar - home to ten higher education institutions (eight of which are branch campuses of US-based universities).

One of the larger corporations using the Eco-Takeouts™ is Ball Corporation - a provider of metal packaging for beverages, foods and household products, and of aerospace and other technologies and services to commercial and governmental customers. 18 months ago the company began using the Eco-Takeouts™ in two cafeterias at its corporate headquarters and has since not only seen a cost savings of \$12,000 but has also improved its Sustainability Initiatives success.



Food cart vendor participating in the Go Box program

Laura Weiss has lived in Portland, Oregon for 13 years and is a huge fan of the [downtown food carts](#). During a recent year-long stint at Aramark she learned of the Eco-Takeouts™ containers and was inspired to put together a business plan to introduce them to the food cart vendors through her [Go Box Program](#). The rollout of her pilot program this past summer, which included roughly 30 food cart customers and 3 vendors, was very well received, and Laura learned a great deal. She is currently developing a drop box prototype and hopes to launch a full program in the near future.

Six years ago Bill Andreozzi, Business Manager of the Rhode Island School of Design's dining and catering, tried to start a reusable mug program, but the students lost all of the mugs. The school then went on to purchase more environmentally friendly products, but found that their purchase costs were exorbitant. Then, a couple of years ago, Bill saw an article about the Eckerd College research. He took the program one step further and developed the OZZI (pronounced oh-zee) machine - which allows students to exchange their used eco-containers for a token to get a new one.



The OZZI machine

The Eco-Clamshell Reusable To-Go Program research project was funded by a grant from the Environmental Research and Education Foundation (EREF). [Click here](#) to view the full final report on the EREF Web site.

EREF is a 501(c)(3) class charity that fund and directs scientific research and educational initiatives for waste management practices to benefit industry participants and the communities they serve. The EREF allocates between \$0.5 and \$1 million annually in research grants and graduate level scholarships, with focus areas that include:

- Transport/Collection
- Policy/Economics
- Recycling/Waste Minimization
- Combustion/Waste-to-energy
- Equipment/Safety
- Conversion Technologies
- Life cycle inventory/analysis
- Landfills

For more complete information on EREF funded research, its scholarship program and how to donate to this great cause, visit www.erefdn.org.



Environmental Research & Education Foundation

Lighting a path to sustainable waste management practices

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