

**Reading Area Community College**  
**Sustainability Report 2023-24**

**RACC's Sustainability Mission:** To promote socially-, environmentally-, and economically-just sustainability through curriculum, culture, and community at RACC.

**Goal Progress Report for 2023-24**

- I. Host another, bigger Environmental Awareness Week, creating more events, more online participation, and opening the events up to the public.
  - A. See #5 (below) for description of Environmental Awareness Week.
- II. Host/facilitate at least two panel discussions:
  - A. See #5 (below) for description of “Don’t Trash It” panel discussion as well as Alpek Polyster’s presentation and discussion at Environmental Awareness Week.
- III. Host/facilitate more speakers (with animal ambassadors) to talk about sustainability inside and outside Berks County.
  - A. See #5 (below) for a description of EAW speakers. Though we did not have animal ambassadors this year, we had many engaging speakers.
- IV. Host/facilitate a sustainability film and discussion:
  - A. Yocum Library hosted “Trash Trail” film and discussion as part of Environmental Awareness Week. They made this available online to engage students who may not come to campus.
- V. Grow our online presence, offering more online/virtual opportunities for student engagement in sustainability.
  - A. The Yocum Library posted all Sustainability events, meetings, and materials on the portal.
  - B. The Yocum Library hosted an online film showing and discussion.
  - C. As part of EAW, CAH hosted an online sustainability poetry contest. We had limited participation and published the winning poem on the portal.
- VI. Evaluate solid waste removal on campus to determine two specific ways to decrease waste and/or increase legitimate recycling or repurposing methods.
  - A. Included in this report (see #1, below, in “This Year’s Sustainability Initiatives”) is our recycling report for the year.
  - B. We plan to focus more on ways to decrease solid waste and improve our general recycling procedure across campus.
- VII. Evaluate energy use (and conservation) on campus to determine two ways to improve energy efficiency.
  - A. No progress made on this. Tabled for next academic year.
- VIII. Define and describe a method of development a climate resiliency plan for RACC.
  - A. No progress made on this. Tabled for next academic year.

**This Year’s Sustainability Initiatives:**

During the 2022-23 academic year, RACC’s Sustainability Taskforce, in conjunction with RACC’s Environmental Club, prioritized education and outreach, growing a culture of sustainability awareness on campus through speaking events, films, readings, discussions, and partnering with the larger Reading/Berks County community.

**1. The College’s 2023-24 Recycling:**

\* Sustainability  
\* Manage

## RECYCLING

---

**WEITZ HEALTHCARE PAVILION  
(ER STUEBNER INC - AJ BLOSENSKI)**

Category	Recycled/Ton	Trash/Ton
Masonry & Clean Fill	134.88	
Paper & Cardboard	17.39	
Metal	13.69	
Drywall	7.48	
Wood	2.95	
Trash		4.27
<b>Totals</b>	<b>176.39</b>	<b>4.27</b>

96%

Construction Waste  
has been Recycled

**GFL ENVIRONMENTAL  
(RACC CAMPUS)**

Category	FY-22-23	FY 23-24
Trash/Ton	83.0	83.0
Cardboard Recycled/Ton	22.7	22.7
Total Refuse/Ton	105.7	105.7
Percentage Recycled Material	21.5%	21.5%

GFL Environmental trucks do not have scales. The weights provided above are approximate based on a formula using the container size, material, and number of pick ups. These numbers may be the same from year to year if the services stay the same.

2. **Environmental Club Activities:** Throughout the year the Environmental Club had clean-ups the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of every month and they hosted a movie The Great American Garbage Patch on March 21. The students participated in an Earth Day clean up in West Reading on April 21, 2024.
3. **1<sup>st</sup> Sustainability Award Given:** This year RACC’s Sustainability Taskforce created a Sustainability Award, which recognizes one student who goes above and beyond in their efforts to create and develop sustainability at RACC and beyond. It’s an award that

recognizes valuable leadership in environmental advocacy that our campus and global community greatly needs right now.

This year, we gave Roxsonna Janiszewski the Sustainability Award. This is what Stephanie Andersen read at the award's ceremony:

*Robert Swan once said, "The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it."*

*Roxy is a person who understands that if she wants to see a change in the world, she must step up and create that change herself. Indeed, that's what she has done this year. She attended monthly meetings, contributed ideas for engaging more students in the work of sustainability, and she was tireless in her efforts to plan and deliver an amazing Environmental Awareness Week. She not only helped market the EAW events, she also gave a fantastic presentation on thrifting—how to best do it and why it's important to the environment. She even invited other students to get involved and participate in a thrifting fashion show. After her presentation, I decided I would try more thrifting myself.*

*Just last week, Roxy volunteered several hours of her time at RACC's table at Berks Earth Day in City Park. Her willingness to give her time in order to support sustainability is admirable. Joey Flamm Costello, another member of the Sustainability Taskforce, said that she has really enjoyed watching Roxy commit to putting her interests and passion into action. Such fortitude is a rare and valuable characteristic. Like Joey, I have no doubt that Roxy will continue to be a leader in sustainability work as she leaves RACC for the next step in her academic and professional journey. It is people like her who make me believe that we truly can succeed in making the next generation's planet a healthy, livable, and prosperous place. As Peter Drucker once said, "The best way to predict the future is to create it."*

#### **4. RACC's Visit to Alpek Polyester**

In preparation for an Environmental Awareness Week, which we hoped would bring RACC and the Berks community together in a collaborative way, a diverse group of RACC employees—faculty, staff, and administration—visited and toured Alpek Polyester, a Berks county recycling plant that focuses on PET, polyethylene terephthalate, the chemical name for the kind of clear, lightweight, and strong plastic used for products like soda bottles. The tour, which allowed us to observe the whole process by which Alpek gathers its plastics—from local recycling collectors—washes them, and recycles them into pellets that will exclusively be used in the making of the new product, was an engaging and enlightening one. Indeed, most of us left the facility with a better, and more affirmative, idea of how plastics, when completely and continuously recycled, can create a more sustainable, environmentally-friendly economy and community.

#### **5. Environmental Awareness Week**

RACC's Sustainability Taskforce and the Environmental Club once again joined forces to celebrate RACC's commitment to sustainability with a week-long Environmental

Awareness Celebration in the Spring 2023-2024 semester, 12 February to 15 February. We advertised the week's events on the portal as well as drawing attention to the week's focus with signs (10) placed around campus.

Continuing our commitment to interdisciplinary and collaborative participation, the Taskforce asked each division to create activities that would highlight their disciplines' unique relationship to, and engagement with, sustainability, particularly with upcycling, this year's EAW theme. The majority of divisions participated by choosing one day during EAW, "manning" a booth in Berks lobby, and offering engaging and educative hands-on activities that evidenced their relationship with sustainability. The theme of upcycling was reinforced and expanded on by (i) Yocum library offering a film screening of *Trash Trail*, (ii) RACC students hosting a Sustainable Fashion Event and an upcycling project with hanging planters, (iii) a diverse group of RACC employees visiting and touring Alpek Polyester recycling plant and (iv) community leaders who are invested in sustainability sharing their knowledge through presentations from representatives from Berks Nature, Alpek Polyester, Reading Solid Waste, Reading Sustainability, Cogle's Recycling, and the City of Reading.

Focusing on the 2024 EAW theme of consumerism, day one of EAW featured a student-led thrifted outfit competition. RACC students and staff were invited to submit images of their best thrifted ensembles. The winning submissions include that of Anisa Reinstrom and Sara Moyer. Alongside the competition, RACC student Roxsonna Janiszewski hosted a presentation on Sustainable Fashion Tips & Tricks. In her presentation, she reviewed thrifting pointers, strategies for extending the lifespan of clothing, and a local thrifting guide for Berks County.



### **CAH's Participation in EAW**

With the Communications, Arts, and Humanities division manning their table on Valentine's Day, they merged the themes of love and sustainability through inviting students and staff to make upcycled bookmarks and Valentine's cards. The majority of the materials—old magazines and books, previously used material and ribbons, scrabble tiles, etc.—used for these projects were donated and, thus, repurposed. Students and staff were also invited to submit online a poem or work of art that focused on consumerism or sustainability. In this way, students and staff created eco-friendly Valentine's gifts for

friends and family, and entered raffles to win eco-friendly prizes. These activities generated informal but inspiring conversations throughout the day that focused on individual and institutional relationships to the environment, sustainability, and upcycling.

**The STEM division** manned a table for Environmental Awareness Week where students could plant organic tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers to germinate at home. Information on native pollinator plants, construction of a bug hotel and locally available farmers markets and produce was provided. Students were also able to enter a raffle for gardening sets, garden gnomes and wildflower seeds.

**The SS/HS Division participated in EAW.** Jodi Greene had a student poster presentation and provided QR codes and postcard with information about how to contact government representatives about environmental issues. There were other poster presentations related to the psychological impact of climate change. Birdhouses were made out of coffee cans and students planted sugar peas to take home and grow. In addition to EAW, honors general psychology students presented posted on the psychological effects of climate change at curiosity and creativity days.



**The City of Reading's Sustainability Manager and their Environmental Advisory Communications Committee** came to RACC for Environmental Awareness Week. They tabled in Berks Main Lobby.

**The Environmental Club** manned a table handing out water bottles, reusable bags, in those bags we also had recycle notebook, metal straw and biodegradable #2 pencils. We had conversations with individuals through the day about the club's purpose and how we promote sustainability.

**The Foundational Studies Division** held its Environment Awareness Week event on 2/14 in Berks Hall lobby from 9:00AM-2:45PM, along with the CAH Division and the Environmental Club. Winners were notified on Thursday, and prizes were delivered/picked up that afternoon and today.

Tamie Dickson set up an "Estimation Station" with a non-uniform shaped jar, half-filled with various-sized buttons (to make it more of a challenge

local and regional attractions, DVD players, telescopes, digital cameras, binoculars, and even karaoke machines. The Yocum Library offers passes to the Tyler Arboretum, Hawk Mountain, the Brandywine Conservancy, Reading Science Center, and the Reading Public Museum which currently features a nature exhibit.

Library staff worked with our café manager Kyle Murphy to provide sustainable snacks that would also be inclusive. He prepared the snacks from scratch, eliminating packaging, and provided compostable utensils and cups as well as reusable serving bowls. We used cloth tablecloths rather than disposable paper, and donated the remaining food to students.

Library staff chose to advertise in digital format (the MyRACC portal with postings and event listings) to reduce the use of paper posters.

### **Additional Environmental Awareness Week Events:**

**Alpek Polyester EAW Visit to RACC:** After RACC visited Alpek Polyester, we were thrilled to host them at RACC as part of Environmental Awareness Week. Dayana Blandon and Rodrigo Castro Uribe offered a wonderful explanation and demonstration of their recycling process to a small audience. Students asked some thoughtful questions, and afterward, several stayed after the presentation to introduce themselves. Not only did this presentation offer insight into just how sustainable recycling can be; it also demonstrated the way a circle economy is already underway right here in Berks County. It would be beneficial for RACC (by way of the Sustainability Taskforce) to continue to nurture our relationship with this company. They have sustainable business practices, can continue to do presentations at the College, and they may be a potential employer for our students, especially those who want to work in sustainability.

**Berks Nature visit:** Melissa Acosta, Berks Nature's community educator, visited RACC for Environmental Awareness Week. Though her event was moved due to weather complications, she was able to give an articulate and engaging presentation on sustainability in Berks County, Berks Nature's role in that, and how students can more actively engage in the work of sustainability in their own lives, as students, and throughout the larger community. She expressed interest in returning to RACC for future presentations.

**Don't Trash It--Discussion on trash and recycling with City of Reading Sustainability Manager, Solid Waste Manager, and representative from Cogle's Recycling:** This panel was well attended, and students asked thoughtful questions about recycling, waste, and sustainability in Reading. We learned that despite rumors that most items put in recycling bins are not actually recycled, the reality is much brighter. Recycling is a vital part of a circular economy, and in Berks County, recycling plants recycle most of what they take in. The reason for this is the commodification of so much of what can be recycled now. RACC's relationship with the City of Reading is important for our students and our community alike, and this a relationship we should certainly continue to nurture.

**Environmental Awareness Week Portal Posts: (see below)**



Sustainability Taskforce · 8d



Winning poem (on topics of sustainability or consumerism) submitted by student **Leslie Leh** for **Environmental Awareness Week**:

**Consumerism**

Buy two for three dollars  
Said the White to the Blue collars  
No wonder the poor get blamed for wars and garbage just the same  
Would they even sell re-usable bags if it did not mean we'd stop double bagging  
It's always the suit and tie's trading lies for buys  
The farm hands' lives depend on the fruits of the labor so they think twice  
If only the *hands on* were the ones to set the price  
Of Superbowl tickets, and a Kanye show  
Then maybe, we all could go  
We live in a way where we have to choose health or other  
Everyday  
Trade and barter  
Now that's a conversation starter  
I would take a time machine over these vending machines any day  
What is convenient about so much waste *any way*.

By *Leslie Leh, Science Undergraduate*

[Show less](#)



16 2 592



**Diane Gerson** · 7d

Amen!

Reply · 2 · smiley face



**Mikayla Pyatt** · Social Science/Human Services · 7d

Well done! Passionate and moving

Reply · 2 · smiley face



Sustainability Taskforce · 12d



Thrifting tips & tricks from **Roxsonna Janiszewski**, student member of **RACC's Sustainability Taskforce**, in her Monday presentation about **avoiding fast fashion**. Yes, her outfit is thrifted! 😊

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8qsye92zjA>



9 486





**Sustainability Taskforce** · 12d (edited)

**Environmental Awareness Week** is not over yet! Don't miss our **panel today at noon in Yocum 117** (1st floor lecture hall). **Learn about local recycling issues and environmental careers.** Snacks provided. And visit **Berks Hall lobby** to meet **city officials** and talk more about green issues from **9am-4pm**.



**Don't trash it!**

Recycling and Waste  
in Reading, PA

For *Environmental Awareness Week*,  
join **RACC graduates**  
Reading, PA's Solid Waste Manager, **Steven Harray** &  
Reading's Sustainability Manager, **Bethany Ayers-Fisher**,  
along with  
**Tiffany Macauly**, from Cogle's Recycling

And learn about the City's recycling program, goals, & career opportunities in waste management. **SNACKS PROVIDED!**

**WHEN:** Thursday, February 15, 12:00-1:30PM  
**WHERE:** Yocum 117



6 406



**Kim Stahler** · 14d (edited)

Our **keynote speaker event** will now take place **Wednesday, February 14, at 10:30am to noon, in the Miller Center**. Melissa is a passionate environmentalist who works at Berks Nature.



**RACC students  
can build a  
GREENER  
Berks County**

*Ever wondered how the choices you  
make can change the world?*

Join us to hear from special guest **MELISSA ACOSTA**, a bilingual woman deeply passionate about the environment. She will bring her rich history of environmental advocacy to her discussion of cultivating sustainability in Berks County's diverse and vibrant community.




419



Comment as Mary Ellen Heckman...



 **Sustainability Taskforce** · 15d (edited) ⋮




**The library's cute little robots Gadget & Gizmo** are racing around the **Berks Hall lobby**. They can be checked out from Yocum's **Library of Things**. Environmental Awareness Week is this week.




<https://racc.instructuremedia.com/embed/a3e80f7b-f584-4dc5-a2c9-e8d2ef0ccb9f>

**Robots EAW**


Robots EAW

<https://racc.instructuremedia.com/embed/a3e80f7b-f584-4dc5-a2c9-e8d2ef0ccb9f>



 3  3 

 6  4  380


---

 **Joshua Cutts** 15d ⋮


**Go Gadget!**

Reply  2 

[View 3 replies](#)



 Comment as Sustainability Taskforce... ▶



---

 **Sustainability Taskforce** · 15d ⋮

**Check out TODAY'S events for Environmental Awareness Week**, all around the campus, **before the snow comes!**

<b>MON</b>	<b>BERKS HALL LOBBY, 9AM-4PM</b> - Visit the Library of Things, contact your legislators, learn from Psychology student research, and play a game with Early Childhood Education students
	<b>STUDENT UNION BUILDING, 12PM-2PM</b> - Sustainable Fashion Event - share your best upcycled outfits and enjoy some snacks!
	<b>ONLINE, 10AM</b> - film screening, <i>Trash Trail</i> (link in myRACC portal)
	<b>YOCUM LIBRARY, 2PM</b> - In-person film screening, <i>Trash Trail</i>

 1 

 1  207



Sustainability Taskforce · 20d



Our keynote speaker will be **Melissa Acosta from Berks Nature**, next **Tuesday, February 13, 1:30-3:00PM** in **Yocum 117**. Come enjoy some snacks and celebrate **Environmental Awareness Week!**

**RACC students can build a GREENER Berks County**

Ever wondered how the choices you make can change the world?

Join us to hear from special guest **MELISSA ACOSTA**, a bilingual woman deeply passionate about the environment. She will bring her rich history of environmental advocacy to her discussion of cultivating sustainability in Berks County's diverse and vibrant community.

**WHEN:**  
Tuesday, February 13  
1:30-3:00PM

**WHERE:**  
Yocum 117

Berks Nature celebrates 50 years of Saving Nature in 2024



Melissa Acosta Flyer.pdf



3 970



Sustainability Taskforce · 21d



LOOK at all the activities and speakers for **Environmental Awareness Week, NEXT WEEK!** Click on **Events** on our portal page to read more.

**Environmental Awareness Week  
Schedule of Events**  
February 12-15, 2024  
9:00-4:00

**MON** **BERKS HALL LOBBY, 8AM-4PM** - Visit the Library of Things, contact your legislators, learn from Psychology students research, and play a game with Early Childhood Education students.

**STUDENT UNION BUILDING, 12PM-2PM** - Sustainable Fashion Show - share your best upcycled outfit!

**ONLINE, 8AM** - Film screening, *Frash Trail* (link in myRACC portal)

**YOCUM LIBRARY, 2PM** - In-person film screening, *Frash Trail*

**TUES** **BERKS HALL LOBBY, 8AM-4PM** - Do some puzzles with Foundational Studies, learn about a science in field that maps old fields into new fields, and learn about what the Environmental Club is doing to protect the environment.

**TUTORING CENTER, 10:30AM-2PM** - Upcycled hanging planters with Linda Loh. Come your own plants!

**YOCUM LIBRARY ROOM 117, 1:30-2:30PM** - Keynote Speaker Melissa Acosta from Berks Nature (snacks provided)

**WED** **BERKS HALL LOBBY, 8AM-4PM** - Make bookmarks and upcycled Valentines with the Communications, Arts, and Humanities Division.

**ONLINE** - Submit a poem or work of art that focuses on conservation or sustainability to Stephanie Anderson at sanderson@berks.edu. Your work may be featured in the portal!

**RAVEN'S LOUNGE, 12:00PM** - Dayana Handon and Rodrigo Castro Uribe, special guests from Ajkaj Polyster, will discuss the surprising secrets of recycling (snacks provided).

**THU** **BERKS HALL LOBBY, 8AM-4PM** - Join the City of Reading for a discussion about sustainability & climate resilience and STEM Division for a vegetable planting activity, instructions for building a bug house, and more!

**YOCUM 117, 12:00PM** - Servus Harty (Sustainability Solid Waste Manager), Bethany Ayers Fisher (Reading Sustainability Manager), & Tiffany Marcella (Reading's Recycling) will discuss Reading's recycling program, goals, & career opportunities in waste management (snacks provided).



2 352

6. **Berks County Earth Day in City Park, April 20, 2024:** For the first time, RACC's Sustainability Taskforce tabled at Berks County's Earth Day celebration. Three RACC students and two RACC faculty manned the table, asking passersby what role they believed RACC should play in creating and maintaining sustainability in Berks County. We gave away flyers about RACC's Sustainability initiative as well as RACC tote bags and pens. We engaged with well over 50 people. Some of the feedback we received were as follows:

*Waste less.*

*Smile at everyone.*

*No animal abuse.*

*Recycle.*

*Charge ports for electronic vehicles.*

*More accessibility.*

*More trees.*

*Help with homeless.*

*Offer courses in self-sufficiency (foraging, small farming, etc.)*

*More community activities to help educate kids and residents.*

*Plant trees.*

*Go to the homeless and help them enroll in classes.*

*Plant a native garden with edible plants.*

*Solar energy.*

*Recycling.*

*Use bamboo toilet paper and paper towels.*

*Use chemical-free products.*

*Offer free community classes.*

*Work with youth as much as possible.*

*Educate people about littering.*

*Do not throw trash, and be kind to the earth, please.*

*Incorporate sustainability into curriculum.*

*Recycle.*

*More cleaners.*

*More programs for homeless.*

*End poverty.*

*Plant a tree.*

*More trash/recycling cans.*

*More trash cans.*

*Make a garden.*

*Make a garden.*

*Incorporate more ways to recycle on campus.*

*Reuse water bottles.*

*Incorporate sustainability into RACC's overall mission statement.*

*Be kind.*

*I think we can help by rehabilitating animals.*



**Sustainability Taskforce** in 20d



**Monday, April 22 is Earth Day.**

- "The first Earth Day in 1970 mobilized millions of Americans from all walks of life to birth the modern environmental movement. Since then, Earth Day has evolved into the largest civic event on Earth, activating billions across 192 countries to safeguard our planet and fight for a brighter future." [Source](#)
- Check your knowledge about environmental issues by taking the [Earth Day Quizzes](#).



🕒 Scheduled on: 22 April 2024 @ 12:00 pm

### **Reading Area Community College's Sustainability Goals for 2024-25**

1. Suggest the importance of including sustainability in the College's Mission Statement/Strategic Plan.
2. Table at Berks County Earth Day in City Park. Involve students.
3. Facilitate opportunities for students and staff to work in and with the community on sustainability projects.
4. Reimagine/revise Environmental Awareness Week with the following considerations:
  - Continue to work to engage online student community.
  - Work on more effective marketing for events on campus to bring larger groups in attendance.
  - Potentially change the date of the event to align more with Earth Day.
  - Host fewer events.
  - Consider making the event longer, spanning a whole month rather than a week.
5. Facilitate at least one event in the fall semester that focuses on sustainability and empowers students. This could be:
  - An engaging and relevant speaker
  - A film/discussion or even
  - A book discussion
6. Engage more students in the Sustainability Taskforce's work.
7. Continue to grow our online presence, offering more online/virtual opportunities for student engagement in sustainability.
8. Evaluate solid waste removal on campus to determine two specific ways to decrease waste and/or increase legitimate recycling or repurposing methods. **(Tabled from last year)**
9. Evaluate energy use (and conservation) on campus to determine two ways to improve energy efficiency. **(Tabled from last year)**
10. Define and describe a method of development a climate resiliency plan for RACC. **(Tabled from last year)**