



Bard College – RecycleMania 2019 Case Study

Valentine's Day

1. Contact info:

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2. Focus of Case study

To spread awareness of items sold on campus that seem recyclable but are not, and give an example as to how they can be repurposed.

3. Detailed description of campaign component:

We collected packaging that was used to sell sushi at Bard's on-campus Cafe. We took the top parts of the packaging, which could not be recycled, as they are made of number 6 plastic and are not technically a container, and rinsed them off. We planned to make the plastic into "shrinky-dink" valentines. Shrinky-dinks are a craft popular for children in which one cuts a shape out of a sheet of plastic, decorates it with markers or colored pencils, and puts it in a low-temperature oven for 5 to 10 minutes. The decorated plastic then shrinks and thickens, becoming a small charm that can be kept as a toy or used on a keychain, a necklace, etc.

Three days before Valentine's Day, four students set up a table in the Campus Center, which is the same building as the Cafe. At the table was the plastic packaging, art supplies, and a toaster oven. Other students could come up to the table, cut out and decorate a valentine and watch it shrink in our oven. Additionally at the table, we had origami hearts made out of paper that was repurposed from posters for events that had passed. Students could choose a ready-made heart or learn how to fold their own. They then placed their shrinky-dink valentine in a paper heart and wrote a message to a friend. On Valentine's Day, the students who organized the event delivered the Valentines to the recipient's on-campus mailbox.

At the table, we were able to spread the message that when giving a gift, we can think outside the box and repurpose unwanted items to prevent waste at the same time. We also spread the message that this plastic is not recyclable and we should not contaminate the recycling bin with it.

4. Planning steps & timeline to implement:

1. Determine that sushi packaging from the on-campus cafe is not recyclable and that many students don't know this. Decide to turn this plastic into valentines at a tabling event that will happen three days before Valentine's Day.
2. Make a prototype shrinky-dink with sushi packaging to see if it works.
3. One week before the event, place a collection bin for sushi packaging, tops only.
4. During the week before the event, obtain a toaster oven and extension cord (if possible), craft supplies, scissors, other table decorations, etc. Find used paper and fold as many origami hearts as you would like, ideally about 30.
5. On the day before the event, collect the sushi packaging tops, clean about 40 or 50 of them.
6. On the day before the event or the day of, advertise it in places such as the dining hall or on social media.
7. On the night of the event, bring all materials to the campus center and set up. Talk to everyone who passes by and encourage them to make a valentine. Explain why we are doing this. Either the participants can watch their valentine shrink in the toaster oven or they can leave it up to us. Be sure to keep track of which Valentines are to be sent to whom. Make sure they write the name of the recipient on them.
8. After the event, shrink any that we did not have time to shrink at the table.
9. On Valentine's Day or the day before, bring valentines to the post office to be delivered.

5. Resources and stakeholders involved

Resources used:

2 Student sustainability staff members

2 Eco Club members

Toaster oven- donated by college faculty member

Extension cord- donated by college faculty member

Paper for reuse- was already in sustainability office

Collection box- cardboard box obtained and decorated by Eco Club member

Craft Supplies and Scissors- borrowed from sustainability office

Sushi packaging- collected from campus cafe

Table- provided by Student Activities department

Oven- in dorm kitchen

Advertising materials- Designed by Eco Club member, printed through Sustainability Office

6. Describe the Results of this campaign component

- a. General results - Students learned about an item that often contaminates the recycling bin and that they should leave it out. Students were provided with an example of how to repurpose old items.
- B. Additionally, there was another student group giving out valentines that contained a lot of waste. They saw what we were doing and reflected on how they could make their valentines more sustainable next year.
- C. About 40 reusable valentines were made by students

7. What would you do differently in the future?

In the future, we would test the shrinking with the same oven that we planned to use at the event, or we would not bring an oven at all and would shrink them afterwards. We did not realize that shrinking time would be different in a different oven, and it took us a little while to figure out how to do it in the one we had.

8. What advice would you give to another college that wanted to do a similar effort?

Another college should make sure to test the shrinking before the actual event. In a toaster oven it takes about 10 minutes or more. The plastic will roll up first, but be patient and keep it in the oven, it will unroll. Also since there is a lot going on at the table, be sure to keep it organized or get a large table. Also, have the table going for 3 hours if you are able, it can be staffed in different shifts.

9. Photos and Graphics



We made folded "table tents" for the dining hall

tables, to advertise



A student shows their completed shinky-dink and origami heart valentine



Our example of a shinky-dink valentine to show off at the table for those new to the idea