

THE ECO MOSQUITO*

SUSTAINABILITY NEWS AND EVENTS AT HSPH AND BEYOND

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Soon the winter solstice will hail the official start of winter with the shortest day of the year on December 21. Instead of cursing the harsh northern climate, take a moment to reflect on how interesting it is to be living in a place where the effects of the Earth's rotation around the sun are so apparent!

Composting Confidential: The Real Recycling Story at HSPH

We've all seen the tireless custodians running around the School to empty the waste bins before they overflow. When you see them throw the trash, recycling, and compost bags into a single barrel, do you silently wonder if we're doing all this sorting for nothing? Don't worry, our custodians are the School's recycling superheroes! We caught up with custodian Jorge Ruiz to get the full story. On a typical day, Jorge makes about 50 stops around campus collecting waste. Since dragging around 3 barrels isn't feasible, all bags are collected together and separated in the basement. That's the easy part. Then the custodians have to correct our mistakes. Jorge says he sees items like yogurt cups, bottles, and cans in the trash all the time. These are all recyclable and shouldn't be sent to the landfill! With compost, sorting is even more important. Composting involves the aerobic biological decomposition of organic materials to produce a usable product—soil! When non-compostable materials are mixed in, the product is considered contaminated and won't be accepted by the compost hauling company. Jorge makes sure that this doesn't happen. The food containers, coffee and soup cups, plates, napkins, cutlery, and coffee stirrers from Sebastian's, as well as all food waste, should be composted. Anything else will contaminate the load, so Jorge has to pick it out. He says that overall, Kresge and the cafeteria have the cleanest compost. We're sorry to report that Buildings 1 and 2 have the most contaminated compost. Jorge's message to everyone at the School: Look at the signs above the bins. Take a minute to inform yourself about what goes where. We all play a part in doing a great thing together.



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2012 WAS A GOOD YEAR!

The **London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics** were the most sustainable games in history. Among other achievements, Some 97% of waste from construction was diverted from landfills and 70% of the games' waste was reused, recycled, or composted.

Harvard published its first **Sustainability Impact Report** showing that greenhouse gas emissions at the University have decreased 16% since 2006, even with our 3 million square feet of growth!

Tesla released the **Model S**, a fully electric, premium sedan that has won rave reviews as well as the 2013 Motor Trend Car of the Year award. The high-performance car has a combined fuel economy of 89 miles per gallon gasoline equivalent. Very impressive!

DID YOU KNOW?

There is an excellent food blog in our midst! The Food Literacy Project from Harvard Dining Services has great posts at foodliteracyproject.wordpress.com. Their tips on fresh winter foods gave us hope that we don't live in a frozen wasteland after all! From Winchester to



Dorchester, there are 9 winter farmers' markets in our immediate area. For the healthy eaters out there, beets, leeks, parsnips, potatoes, and squash are in their prime. Omnivores can delight in local and fresh meats and cheeses for those hearty winter meals. Either way, feel free to stuff your face like this little winter squirrel!

The Season For Green

It *is* the most wonderful time of the year, but you've got to admit that the holidays can be quite the consumption fest. Aside from the holly and the ivy, there's not much "green" going on. Here are some tips for changing that:



- If you have to replace a string of lights, LED lights use 90% less energy and give you the same twinkle. Better yet, get solar-powered lights for outdoor use!
- Plastic trees may be reusable, but a more sustainable option is to buy a real tree that was grown as a renewable resource on a tree farm. Have it recycled into mulch when the holidays are over. Better yet, use a potted tree that can be kept or planted later on!
- The season of giving doesn't imply giving *stuff*. Consider the gift of time spent together and great experiences: a home-cooked meal, a fancy dinner out, tickets to a show, or a free night of babysitting, perhaps?
- It's amazing how beautiful a gift wrapped in a clean paper bag can look with a pretty cloth ribbon tying it all together.
- A Christmas tree is more fun when the ornaments have a special history or meaning. De-clutter the house by turning knick-knacks and refrigerator magnets into one-of-a-kind conversation pieces.
- Most of all, enjoy the time spent with loved-ones!