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Wednesday November 17, 2010

Environmental group promotes recycling, reusing

By Allie Kolechta, Daily Texan Staff
Published: Wednesday, November 17, 2010

While the Campus Environmental Center has seen its share of success in the past year with an expanded on-campus recycling program, the student group urged students on Tuesday to continue embracing sustainability efforts on campus, said environmental science sophomore Michelle Camp.

The center celebrated America Recycles Day on the West Mall as the group gave out free T-shirts to students who took a quiz on recycling on campus. All of the T-shirts were gone by 11:45 a.m.

Formed in 2002, the organization is planning other campaigns to distribute reusable bags and water bottles, as well as T-shirts made from recycled cotton, in order to increase awareness and draw students into the idea of recycling, said Camp, assistant director of the CEC's recycling committee.

"Students respond really well to free stuff, especially if it'll save money," she said. "We need student support to change UT's practices."

This semester, UT placed 35 new outdoor recycling bins with separate compartments for paper, plastic and aluminum, as well as indoor recycling bins for almost every building on campus and compost bins for on-campus eateries such as Jester City Limits and Cypress Bend Cafe.

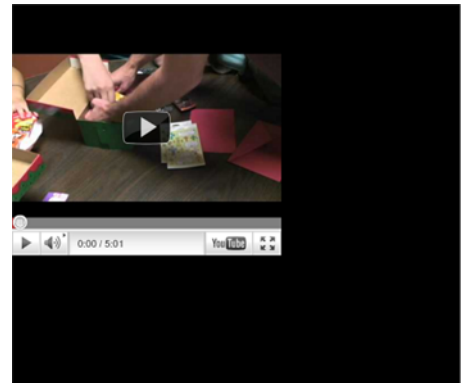
A total of 21,406 trees were saved by on-campus recycling at UT in the fiscal year 2008-09, according to UT's Facilities Services website. While the CEC is getting ready to do another trash audit, they expect to see the numbers go up, said government senior Rachel Aitkens, the group's director.

"I've seen a major change since the green outdoor bins went out," she said. "I know that recycling has gone up because we take it to the companies we recycle with, and we've physically been having to make more trips. It's really exciting to see that happen."

The student environmental group is working with the Freshman Orientation Program and residence halls to spread the word about on-campus recycling, Aitkens said. The next step to increase recycling on the UT campus is a change in the attitude toward it and increasing its awareness, she said.

Students can take the next step in solving the UT's sustainability problem by monitoring what they buy, instead of what they throw away, said geography senior Mark McKim, a member of the group's recycling task force committee.

"Recycling is very important in the realms of environmental responsibility but it's not the most important," he said. "As students, we should take the time to think about our purchases and reduce and reuse rather than force ourselves to recycle."



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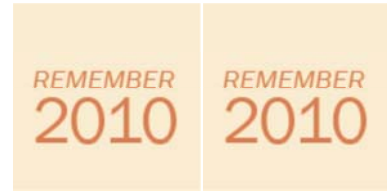
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