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MU group works toward zero waste at football game

By FRED PACE The Herald-Dispatch Sep 15, 2019

1 of 2



Sholten Singer/The Herald-Dispatch Tyler Bonner, right, and Michael Viox, of Zero Waste Event Productions, set up recycling and trash receptacles around Joan C. Edwards Stadium during the Marshall and Ohio football game on Saturday, Sept. 14, 2019, in Huntington. They worked to collect and sort the waste to reduce the amount that would go to a landfill
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HUNTINGTON — There have always been recycling bins set up around Marshall University's Joan C. Edwards Stadium in Huntington for home football games, but on Saturday a recycling event took place for the first time to make the game between the Thundering Herd and the Ohio Bobcats waste free to the

greatest extent possible.

"Today we are walking around setting up special recycling bins with flags so you can see them from a distance, as well as handing out recycling and trash bags to individual tailgaters," said Amy Parsons-White, sustainability manager at Marshall University's Sustainability Department. "Later, we send around the cargo bike to pick up all of the bags and bring them back to be sorted by volunteers."

Parsons-White said Zero Waste Event Productions, from Athens, Ohio, was there working with approximately 30 to 40 university staff and volunteers during tailgating and throughout the game to reduce the amount of waste headed for the landfill to near zero if possible.

"They are professionals at this and do major music festivals," she said. "They will be teaching us today the process of how to efficiently recycle on a large scale."

Tyler Bonner, CEO of Zero Waste Event Productions, said after the waste material is brought back to the sorting materials headquarters set up in the back of the stadium near the student entrance, it is placed on a conveyor belt and is sorted.

"The trash will go into dumpsters and recyclables will be sent to be recycled," he said. "We separate out compostable items as well. The goal is to keep as much out of the landfill as possible."

"By recycling as much as they can, we reduce the cost of landfill waste haul, the amount of carbon dioxide and methane produced and the amount of plastic that ends up sitting in landfills," Parsons-White said.

She says the plan is to weigh everything.

"We are going to generate a report to update the public on how much we were able to keep from going to the landfill," she said.

Parsons-White said if all goes well, she will look into the university purchasing its own conveyor belt for recycling at other events at Marshall.

"Zero Waste Event Productions had its conveyor belt built by engineering students at Ohio University, so maybe our engineering department might want to jump in on that," she said. "I guess we will see how it goes after the game today and what our report tells us."

Parsons-White says the definition of sustainability is the ability to be maintained.

"We should all be practicing sustainable techniques every day simply because it's what has to be done to keep our community at its current environmental and economic condition," she said. "Of course, we would all like to see these things improve, so we must go above and beyond. Education and raising awareness as a community is the perfect place to start."

Parsons-White added that volunteers are still needed for future events. To get involved, send an email to bemarshallgreen@marshall.edu. For more information on Marshall University's Sustainability Department, visit <http://www.marshall.edu/sustainability/>.

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