



Standing in Solidarity with Earth

The average US household produces about 4.5 pounds of solid waste per day.

About a third of it is packaging used only to get the item to your home. Producing this waste requires energy for extraction of the raw materials, manufacturing them into various goods, and transportation throughout the whole process. Every pound of solid waste that goes to the landfill generates 1.5 pounds of greenhouse gases. These come from transporting and land-filling the waste and from the natural decomposition that occurs in an anaerobic environment.

- *Low Carbon Diet: A 30-Day Program to Lose 5,000 Pounds* (Gershon, 2006)

The U.S. produces more than 30% of the planet's total waste,



though it is home to only 4% of the world's population.



- *"Moving from Destructive Consumption to a Zero-Waste System"*
Frontier Group, February 2018

Because we know we need to do our part to reduce this shocking statistic, in 2018, the Loretto Community committed to "significantly mitigate our impact on climate change and ecological degradation."

You don't have to look far to see how our patterns of waste are continually degrading Earth. We know that when we throw items away, there really is no "away." As we deepen our commitment to stand in solidarity with Earth, let's examine our patterns of consumption and find new ways to simplify our lives.

If you have questions, more helpful suggestions and tips, or want to connect with the Loretto Community around this initiative, please contact **Jessie Rathburn, Earth Education and Advocacy Coordinator**

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Easy Ways to Reduce Your Environmental Impact

The most effective way to reduce your impact on Earth is simply to consume less.



To reduce packaging, bring your own cloth bags when shopping, buy in bulk, purchase items with the least packaging, and buy reusable items.



If you often use a disposable item, look for a reusable alternative. It's amazing what you can find! A few treasures: washable cotton balls, reusable silicone food bags, metal straws, to-go silverware kits, and good 'ol handkerchiefs!



If you don't have a yard in which you can compost, try starting an indoor worm bin for your kitchen waste. You can also check out local community composting programs.

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Americans produce an immense amount of waste - estimated at over 250 million tons annually. Most of the waste consists of goods that are used only briefly and tossed in the trash. This takes up landfill space, generates gnarly amounts of greenhouse gases, and wastes energy and non-renewable resources.

More than a quarter of the waste Americans send to the landfill is made up of food scraps, yard clippings, and other organic matter that can easily be composted. More than half is made up of materials that can be reused or recycled, such as paper, plastics, metals, glass, wood, rubber, textiles, furniture, and appliances.

– cactiandcoconuts.green/blog/2019/2/20/how-to-conduct-a-waste-audit-in-your-home

Green Reading

[“The Toxic Consequences of America’s Plastic Boom”](#) The Nation, March 2019

[“Where does Your Plastic Go? Global Investigation Reveals America’s Dirty Secret”](#) The Guardian, June 2019

[“The Challenge of Reducing Waste: A Parish Guide”](#) National Catholic Reporter, April 2018

In July 2019, Loretto Motherhouse staff and volunteers conducted a complete waste audit on 2 days’ worth of trash.

Every bag of trash was opened, sorted, weighed, and recorded. Following are the results:

Category	Weight
Paper	11.2 lbs
Cardboard	28.9 lbs
Newsprint	4.8 lbs
Paper Towels/Napkins/Tissues	89.4 lbs
Organics	109.6 lbs
Incontinence Products	123.4 lbs
Food Wrappers	33 lbs
Plastics	82.6 lbs
Styrofoam	1.2 lbs
Medical Waste	6.6 lbs
Glass	0.6 lbs
Miscellaneous	40.6 lbs
Total	531.9 lbs

Now what?

Read on to find actions we can all take to be more Earth-friendly.



Imagine 8 football fields covered thickly with plastic bottles.

This is equivalent to the number of plastic beverage bottles discarded in the U.S. every five minutes. Now imagine a line of plastic water bottles going around the planet five times. This would be equivalent to the number of plastic bottles discarded every week in the U.S., just for water!

– [“The Myth of the Recycling Solution” plasticpollutioncoalition.org](http://plasticpollutioncoalition.org)

The 5 Rs

Refuse

Our lives are full of stuff we don't need, and each item has an ecological cost. Let's become more mindful of what we actually need. When it is not possible to refuse the item, use your money and buying habits to tell companies what you want and don't want.

Reduce

Try to ask yourself before buying: will I use this more than x times? (30 is a good goal!) If not, consider not buying it.

Reuse

Before you throw an item away, think about where it will end up. A landfill? A local stream? The ocean? What will its life be after you throw it away? Before you toss it in the waste basket, be creative and think of ways to reuse, repurpose, or upcycle.

Repair

Don't immediately throw it away if it isn't working! Although it may cost more than you want, many items can be repaired. Call a repairperson, take it back to where you purchased it to be serviced, or find a local repair café (repaircafe.org/en/visit/). When making an initial purchase, make sure you purchase items that will have a long life and that can be repaired, preferably locally.

Recycle

- Every location is different! The only way to know what you can recycle locally is to get sorting guidelines from your local recycling center. Set up bags, boxes, or bins in your house according to these guidelines.
- Look up where to recycle an item on www.earth911.com. You can recycle so much more than you thought you could! It will take some work, but it's worth it.
- TerraCycle sells Zero Waste Boxes (price dependent on material). You pack up and send the items to be recycled (e.g. candy and snack wrappers, action figures, coffee capsules, tape dispensers, ear plugs, and more) to a designated center. To maximize the use of Zero Waste Boxes, fill collectively with family, neighbors, and friends. www.terracycle.com/en-US
- To reduce junk mail, go to www.directmail.com/mail_preference/ and fill out your preferences and information
 - Contact those companies still sending you junk mail and request to be removed from their lists. You can use their self-addressed return envelope, fax a request, or call the 800 number for customer service



Motherhouse staff and residents are now working on ways to reduce our waste:

- We are consulting with the local recycling center to increase our recycling capacity in order to recycle as much locally as possible
- We have put in place systems to recycle all textiles, e-waste, Styrofoam, and mattresses
- Dietary and Environmental Services staff are finding reusable alternatives to single-use items such as:
 - Plastic lids are being replaced with reusable, washable lids
 - Paper napkins are being replaced with cloth napkins
 - Some trash cans will no longer have liners; others will have a washable vinyl liner
- Additional recycling stations are being installed
- We are investigating a campus-wide composting system

Conducting a waste audit helps you see what you actually throw away and can help you determine what changes are possible in your lifestyle. Here's a handy worksheet to help you organize your own waste audit: bit.ly/LC_WasteAudit

Hard-to-Recycle Items

Item	Store/Company	More Information
Athletic Shoes	Nike	www.nike.com/help/a/recycle-shoes
Contact lenses, used blister packs, top foil	Bausch & Lomb	www.bausch.com/our-company/one-by-one-recycling Check for local drop-off option
Corks	ReCork	recork.com/us/en/locations Check for local drop-off option
Christmas Lights	Holiday LEDs	holidayleds.com/christmas-light-recycling-program.aspx Use this option if your local municipality does not recycle Christmas lights.
Crayons	Crazy Crayons	crazycrayons.com/crayon-recycle-program/
Hazardous Waste	Local disposal site	earth911.com
Mattresses	Denver: Spring Back Colorado California: Bye Bye Mattress	www.springbackrecycling.com/locations/colorado/ byebyemattress.com/programs-by-state/california/#
Packing Peanuts	UPS	Check with local stores
Razor blades and packaging	Gillette	www.terracycle.com/en-US/brigades/gillette
Styrofoam	Multiple drop-off and mail-in sites; choose the most local option	www.epspackaging.org
Technology Equipment	GreenDisk (check with local recyclers first)	www.greendisk.com/gdsite/technotrash.aspx
Tennis Balls	ReBounces	www.tennisballrecycling.com/free-tennis-ball-recycling/
Textiles	H&M	hmgroup.com/sustainability/Planet/recycling.html