



Grantee Highlight: Innovation Grant

Kids Can Compost!

The Children's Museum
West Hartford, CT

Organization Overview

As one of the largest sources of third-party education, The Children's Museum is constantly looking to extend their educational reach. RecycleCT Innovation Grant funding in 2017 has helped the Children's Museum implement *Kids Can Compost!*, designed to engage children and families in composting activities.

Since 1927, The Children's Museum has engaged children, families, and schools with fun, hands-on teaching to increase their understanding about science and nature. Their educational programs include hands-on exhibits, topic-specific classes, a preschool, field trips, outreach programs, planetarium shows, wildlife demonstrations, a nature center, camps, public programs and more.



How has RecycleCT helped?

With RecycleCT's funding in 2017, the Museum created an outdoor aerobic composting station, consisting of a three bin system including one plexi-glass wall and educational signage. The Museum's wildlife sanctuary area, butterfly house, and gardens generate leaf and yard debris and, with the generation of food scraps from the museum's visitors and preschool, make up the recipe for the Museum's compost. This outdoor composting display is an important teaching component with weekly programs lead by an environmental educator. Children and their adults can visit throughout the different seasons of the school year and see the various stages of decomposition. Beth Weller, the Director of Operations at the Museum, discusses the public's feedback on this new composting program, "It's a topic a lot of people appreciate. It's certainly something that people are realizing that the more we can do to reduce the impact on the environment, it's very important."

RecycleCT funding has also helped the Children's Museum create and implement an indoor vermicomposting station, which relies on 'red wiggler' worms to break down organic matter, including food scraps from the Museum staff, visitors, and preschool. The worm bins showcase a different type of composting and provide in-depth learning about worms and worm biology with live worms and a larger dissected worm model. The vermicomposting station is a year-round teaching tool with a four-layer bin in addition to a smaller display with a look into a worm burrow.





In addition to the outdoor three-bin system and indoor worm composting bins, the Museum has developed a new composting program that was tested in elementary schools. These new composting and worm composting classroom programs expand upon the lessons about decomposition that students learn at the Museum. Students develop their own composting bins and learn about the scientific concepts behind decomposition and the importance of composting. Due to the success of these pilots, the Museum will add composting and worm composting program offerings to their “Book On Education Program”, which are provided to schools throughout Connecticut.

Beth Weller describes the Museum’s approach to their *Kids Can Compost!* project, “It really needs to be hands on working with young children and we feel that it’s important to get them interested in these topics and encourage them to investigate them while they’re young. It sets their mindset for when they become contributing citizens within our communities and workforce.”

Future Plans

The Children’s Museum will continue their composting project in the future. RecycleCT has provided a platform for them to expand their project, “What we found from this first year of funding is that this topic has legs to go further and that we can investigate what are those next steps. How can we improve upon our reach?” says Beth Weller. The Children’s Museum has been awarded another Innovation Grant from 2018 grant cycle and they plan on creating a workshop for families to bring composting into their homes.

The RecycleCT Foundation, Inc. seeks to promote and support programs that educate Connecticut students or the public about waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting to increase these activities in the state.
<http://www.RecycleCT.com>