

Community and advocacy



Working on your own waste is great, but as you know, you aren't the only one with a garbage can! You can have a bigger impact by helping others start or make strides on their own low-waste journeys or advocating to change systems that create so much waste in the first place. Use your influence by getting connected with your local community, telling your story and sharing knowledge, leading by example, and advocating for change.

Connect with your neighbors

Get to know your neighbors through Nextdoor, neighborhood Facebook groups, sports, clubs, and activities, and events such as National Night Out. You can also join specific interest groups focused on things like “buy nothing” or gardening. Use the people you know as resources for borrowing, lending, and selling things such as home goods or clothing. Not only will you have more shared resources at your fingertips, but you are helping to normalize sharing and borrowing.

Share what you know

Sharing your story and the resource you've learned about can inspire others and bring changes to places you frequent, such as your work, place of worship, or kids' school.

Tell your family, friends and neighbors what you are doing. If people ask, explain the low-waste lifestyle changes you are trying to make. Share on social media or offer to speak to a community group.

You can teach or organize another trainer to teach about recycling and composting, waste prevention, or any of the many life skills that are useful for preventing waste, such as cooking, mending, or gardening. Organize a workplace training or do an event with your child's scout troop, 4H club, ecology, or environmental club.

Lead by example

For some people, actions speak louder than words. Bring the practices you have at home on-the-go by implementing a waste prevention project at an organization or volunteering your time doing waste prevention work.

The following are ideas on projects to complete at your workplace, school, or a similar organization:

- Start or improve your workplace's recycling or organics program. Make sure there are enough recycling bins, put up informational signs, or set up a system to use reusable dishes.
- Plan events to avoid single-use plastic bottles, dishware, decorations, or gifts and trinkets.
- If you host a catered event, make sure your company or caterer has a process in place to donate excess food. Second Harvest Heartland is one organization that uses a platform called MealConnect to get commercially produced excess food to people who need it.



There are many ways to volunteer your time that actively results in less waste. Here are a few ideas:

- Help rescue food with TC Food Justice and The Food Group. The Food Group also has a Glean Team that helps harvest food directly from farms.
- Spread awareness about plastic waste by hosting or joining a litter pickup event. Use the Adopt-a-River toolkit (freshwater.org/aar-toolkit) to plan a cleanup event.
- Volunteer with a sharing and reuse organizations, such as the MN Tool Library, Minneapolis Toy Library, and Minnesota Cloth Diaper Bank.



Hennepin County has a variety of resources and programs that can help you take action in your community:

- Hennepin County Community Recycling Ambassadors are trained volunteers who advocate for the 3Rs in their community by setting up or improving waste diversion efforts and educating others. Learn more at hennepin.us/recycling-ambassadors.
- Business, school and multifamily recycling grants are available to help you set up recycling and organics programs as well as other waste reduction efforts. Learn more at hennepin.us/businessrecycling, hennepin.us/schoolrecycling, and hennepin.us/apartmentsrecycle
- Environmental education grants are available to organizations to educate, engage and empower residents to make positive environmental changes in their daily lives. Topics include waste reduction and recycling, energy conservation, protecting land and water, reducing and properly disposing of hazardous waste, and improving air and water quality. Learn more at hennepin.us/greenpartners



Advocate for change

Although the Zero Waste Challenge is primarily focused on taking personal action, there are many opportunities to use your voice to ask for change on a broader level. Here are few simple ways to be a vocal advocate for reducing waste:

- Contact your local representatives, including city council, county commissioners, and state representatives, and tell them about the changes you want to see to reduce waste.
- Provide constructive feedback to restaurants that use a lot of single-use packaging, or connect them with resources to recycle, compost, donate food and prevent waste.
- Provide feedback to grocery stores, department stores, or anywhere you would like to see them stop offering plastic bags, stock plastic-free items, or offer more options that support a plastic-free lifestyle.
- Contact stores and product manufacturers to ask them to use recycled content in their products and packaging.
- Use your social media influence for good by sharing information about your personal journey or by supporting businesses making positive change.