

NEWSROOM

[Home](#) / [News](#) / [2024](#) / [April](#) / Riding the Green Wave

RIDING THE GREEN WAVE

STUDENTS CHAMPION SUSTAINABILITY ON EARTH DAY AND BEYOND BY LEADING THE CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE ENERGY CONSUMPTION AND BOOST RECYCLING

by [Kelley McGee](#) | April 18, 2024

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Students are responding to the University's challenge to make 2024 the year of sustainability on campus by adopting simple yet impactful habits. These small changes – reusable food containers, turning off lights and mindful water usage – are already making a difference.

'We applaud all of our students who are helping to drive our sustainability efforts. With the President's message of Going Greener '24, sustainability is an important aspect of campus culture and each individual action from the campus community is making the difference,' said Brian Kelley, campus sustainability specialist. "All of these small behavior changes students have adopted do matter; carrying a reusable water bottle, riding a bike, reusing, and recycling all have a positive impact. It is important for individuals to understand how their decisions impact the environment, as the environment ultimately impacts us."

"I live in Madison Residence Hall, and conservation is something we have all been thinking about," said Katherine Darrock '25. "We make it a point to recycle whenever possible – although there is still some confusion about what goes where. We also try to use natural light and open the blinds. Little things for sure, but I think they add up."

[Going Greener '24](#) highlights what the University community already does to counter climate change and to take new, measurable steps to use less energy, repurpose and reuse. It's all about moving Christopher Newport's campus toward being a model of sustainability.

One of the flagship sustainability programs for this academic year has been the Green2Go reusable take-out initiative, which has seen remarkable success in its inaugural year. Since its launch in August 2023, the Green2Go program has overhauled take-out dining on campus, replacing disposable containers with reusable ones. This utilizes the innovative Reuzzi app and QR code system, where students can track their impact by scanning their bins upon check-out and return. The results have been astounding, with more than 100,000 disposable containers eliminated through reuse, equivalent to a length exceeding 14 miles if laid end-to-end.

“Not only has it significantly reduced on-campus waste and eliminated contamination in recycling streams, but it has also saved resources, reduced transportation emissions, and lowered water usage that would have been used in the manufacturing process of disposables,” said Kelley. “This program exemplifies how individual actions from each student impacts the environment, and Christopher Newport University asks the campus community to do its part to be part of the solution.”

“I prefer these Green2Go containers over the old to-go boxes. They’re sturdier,” said Audrey Lihos ’25. “And I’m happy to say I have a 100% return record. The return process is very easy.”

“It’s good for the budget and good for the environment, so I’m all in,” said Christopher Mojica ’25. “If I could make one suggestion, I would add return locations at every residence hall.”

While Kelley considers the first year of the program to be a success, he concedes there are always areas for improvement.

“Inventory control was adjusted for the spring semester to avoid instances of low inventory that was experienced in the fall and will continue to be monitored. Additionally, looking ahead to fall 2024, we are exploring enhancements, including upgrades to the check-out and return process, the introduction of a sweepstakes reward system for properly returning bins, and the determination of logistics needed to potentially add additional return locations,” he said.

Going Greener ’24 is a campus wide initiative built on the foundation set by the Zero Carbon Task Force, chaired by Leadership Professor Dr. Benjamin Redekop, and the work of the University Sustainability Committee.

“There are many facets to Going Greener 2024, ranging from becoming more energy efficient to exploring sources of renewable energy to expanding our recycling program, outreach to alumni and the community, and expanding sustainability research and service opportunities,” said Redekop. “I would encourage everyone to get involved in whatever way they can; working together in common concern for the planet builds a caring community while moving us toward our ultimate goal of zero negative environmental impact — wouldn't that be something!”

Other initiatives include:

- Green2Go Container Amnesty Day
 - Because students sometimes forget to return the containers, the University is offering a one day amnesty on Earth Day, promising “no scanning and no judgment!” Students can drop off containers all day at either the Regattas or The Commons.
- Residence Halls Water Reduction Competition
 - In its second year, the [water competition](#) is a friendly two-week competition amongst main campus residence halls to see which hall achieves the greatest reduction in water usage compared to a two-week baseline period. Simple actions such as turning off water when brushing teeth, limiting showers, washing full loads of laundry on cold water, and reporting leaks are important ways individuals can make a difference for people and the environment.
- End of Year Move-Out Program
 - Students can donate clothes in any condition, electronics in any condition, usable furniture and decor, and non-perishable food through Christopher Newport’s [GiveltUP donate program](#). Going into its fourth year, donation bins will be available in multipurpose rooms in main campus residence halls and outdoor locations next to roll-off dumpsters to provide convenient access for students to donate unwanted items to the community and avoid the landfill. East Campus also has a permanent donation bin located in the first CNU Landing enclosure and Rappahannock will have bins placed outdoors near loading areas. Bins are now available through move-out. Last year, 3,680 pounds of items were diverted from the landfill, but there is opportunity to divert much more.

- Earth Day 2024

- Earth Day is a reminder to take care of our planet through individual actions such as reducing waste, monitoring energy consumption, limiting water usage, and choosing alternative forms of transportation. Positive changes in individual actions have an impact on the environment, which ultimately has a positive impact on ourselves. While Earth Day is observed on April 22nd, the University asks students to prioritize sustainability throughout the year.
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