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## Planting the seeds for change Sculpture prompts conservation and conversation

Mar 17, 2009

By Casey S. Elliott

Several Ohio University students want to see their community's commitment to conservation grow in the coming weeks. Their answer: an interactive sculpture that allows individuals to make their own pledges to the environment.

The "Sustainability Sprout" is located just inside Baker University Center's fourth-floor entrance. It will be on display through the end of April, which Ohio University has designated as Earth Month -- an extension of the April 22 international observance of Earth Day.

The 6-foot sculpture -- crafted to resemble a seed pod -- is built from recycled and recyclable materials. It will continue to "grow" as passersby write their own pledges to the environment on leaves of fabric and tie them to the sculpture.

The 15 students who created the sculpture -- with academic backgrounds ranging from art to environmental science and graphic design to education -- are members of Associate Professor of Art John Sabraw's Art 369B: Special Topics class. The class focuses on the positive impact sustainable living can have on the local and global communities.

"We threw around ideas and focused on education and community participation," class member Emily Bacha said of how students arrived at the "Sustainability Sprout" concept. "That's what this project helps us do. It involves the community and gets the word out as to what you can do to be more sustainable."

Freshman Sarah Clouse paused at the sculpture this morning long enough to pledge to unplug appliances after using them. "I think it is a really cool concept," she said. "It makes people think about everything the leaves are saying."

Fellow freshman Jamie Brown vowed to take shorter showers. "I think it will make a difference -- a small difference, but it will be a difference," she said as she added her pledge to others that included "I will recycle every day," "I will never buy bottled water again" and "I will eat more locally grown food."

Bacha said class members have formed a group, called Common Ground, to pursue future projects in keeping with the cause of sustainability. They hope to inspire changes on campus that will spread to the surrounding community and, eventually, the nation.

After April, the sculpture may be housed at the Office of Sustainability or the Athens Community Center, Bacha said. She said the students also plan to exhibit it at the [Research and Creativity Expo](#) on May 14.



Conservation pledges were written on "leaves" made of recycled fabric and attached to the "Sustainability Sprout." Baker University Center visitors are invited to add their pledges.



Senior Rush Whitacre works to install the "Sustainability Sprout" on the fourth floor of Baker University Center.

Photographer: John Stoops

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