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Thursday, April 2, 2009

## RecycleMania ignites regional green streak Ohio University-Southern senior Joe Bass leads the charge

Mar 31, 2009

By Monica Chapman

This past weekend marked the official end of RecycleMania 2009, but at Ohio University-Southern, momentum is still building, thanks in large part to senior plant biology major Joe Bass.

Southern became the last of Ohio University's regional campuses to initiate a campus recycling program this past December. Within one month's time, the campus was registered for RecycleMania, joining the Lancaster, Zanesville and Athens campuses.

It was the first year the Southern and Zanesville campuses participated in the 10-week intercollegiate recycling competition, which originated between Ohio University and Miami University in 2001. In its ninth year, the competition drew more than 500 university participants nationwide as well as in Canada and India. *Official results aren't due to be posted by RecycleMania organizers until April 17.*

In Ironton, home to the Southern campus, Bass said recycling morale has never been higher.

"In any given region, there are different types of outlooks on being green," he said. "RecycleMania has increased the green conscience here, and people are excited about what's happening."

Southern collected more than 4,000 pounds of recyclables during the competition, accounting for about 30 percent of the campus' overall waste stream, according to Director of Facilities Management Adam Riehl. The campus recently added a second eight-cubic-yard recycling dumpster to accommodate the large volume of recyclables being collected each week. And plans are under way to expand the recycling program and reduce the campus' solid waste pick-up from three to two times per week.

So how does a campus go from non-recycler to über-recycler in four-months' time? According to Riehl, Bass has been laying the groundwork since he arrived on campus, which might help to explain why the initiative has been so well-received.

"Joe had been cultivating the recycling ground here on campus as a student long before my arrival or actions of the administration at large," he said.

As a student worker in Southern's Facilities Management Department, Bass diligently pushed for a recycling program, providing Riehl with literature and multiple e-mail links demonstrating potential benefits to the campus. Bass' dream became a reality this past December with the support of interim Dean Bill Willan and the encouragement of Ed Newman, the university's recycling and refuse manager based on the Athens campus.

"Without them, I dare say that it may never have become a reality," Riehl said. "However, Joe has been the workhorse to help implement the plans of this office regarding recycling, which he usually had some input in



Ohio University-Southern participated in RecycleMania for the first time this year, thanks in large part to the efforts of student and recycling proponent Joe Bass.

Photo courtesy of Ohio University-Southern

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developing."

Known as the "recycling guy" on campus, Bass was quick to assume leadership for the initiative -- coordinating the placement of recycle containers, developing promotional signs and flyers, and collaborating on a uniquely Southern recycling logo. According to Riehl, his knowledge of the history, settlement and development of Ironton and the Ohio Valley added to his credibility within the community.

"Being a nontraditional student, I think Joe has gained a sense of understanding regarding the practical application of green initiatives with a real-world perspective, rather than being radically involved in the extremes of a popular movement just for the sake of being there," Riehl said. "(His) passion for this subject and his incorporation of it into all aspects of his life has allowed him to grow as an individual far beyond what he would have gained if he had left it with his job in my department or at the classroom door."

Bass has no qualms with the popularity of the movement.

In fact, he is planning to capitalize on the recent burst of enthusiasm through a campuswide Earth Day celebration -- the first of its kind at Ohio University Southern. From noon to 6 p.m. April 22, departments across campus will gather in the university's courtyard and rotunda to celebrate the environment and showcase green initiatives within their disciplines.

Bass said the inspiration was, in part, a project for a communication and persuasion class. Through "Project Green Box," Bass helped to circulate a suggestion box among faculty, staff, administrators and students seeking ideas on how to green up campus.

Some of those suggestions will play out during the Earth Week celebration. Those that don't can be addressed through yet another of Bass' environmental endeavors: Ecostep.

As the only green student organization at the Southern campus, Ecostep was established by Bass in January 2007. Unfortunately, the project quickly fizzled because of a lack of participation. Bass hopes the campus' new green initiatives will help to re-energize the organization this spring.

A recent volunteer sign-up session gave him added encouragement.

"I sat down for less than 15 minutes yesterday with a clipboard that said, 'Help green up campus. Volunteer for Earth Day, April 22.' Within 15 minutes, I got 20 signatures," he said. "This has never happened here when it comes to this level of environmental awareness. I believe that once Earth Day is over, it will continue."

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*Official results from RecycleMania 2009 will be available April 17 at [www.recyclemaniacs.org](http://www.recyclemaniacs.org).*

#### **Related Links**

RecycleMania (following this link will take you outside Ohio University's Web site): <http://www.recyclemaniacs.org>  
Ohio University-Southern: <http://www.southern.ohiou.edu/>

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