

Flagstaff Teenagers Educate Consumers on Plastic Bag Sustainability

Environmental Sustainability efforts continue around the state of Arizona as one Flagstaff teenager rallies her schoolmates to collect plastic bags and get the message out to reduce, reuse and recycle.

Natalie Lucas who heads up Flagstaff's Plastic Bag Youth Education Program, (Flagstaff Go Plasticless) got involved initially due to a project at school. However, her interest in the project blossomed from a mandatory homework assignment to launching an environmental awareness campaign through Sinagua High School Peace (Preserving Environments And Conserve Energy) Club to impact Earth Day 2009 in the Flagstaff Community.

With assistance from the Arizona Food Marketing Alliance (AFMA) and the Bag Central Station Coalition, Natalie and her friends began preparations to get local schools involved in the collection of plastic bags. She visited 14 schools and gave educational presentations to 10 of them in the Flagstaff community reaching over 2,200 students and handed out 750 reusable bags provided by AFMA's partnering stores. The message to students... Reduce, Reuse and Recycle your plastic bags by taking them to your local grocery store where Bag Central Station containers are available for the collection of plastic bags.

The Plastic Bag Drive turned into a competition between 14 participating Flagstaff schools. Twenty-two thousand plastic bags which equates to 323.3 pounds of plastic was collected and recycled at Albertsons. The class that collected the most bags in each school received a donut party, donated by local schools and each student received a reusable bag.

Thanks to AFMA's Bag Central Station Recycling program, the support of local grocery stores, retail outlets and Natalie's efforts, the Flagstaff Community is onboard with responsible recycling of plastic bags.

What's up next for Natalie? She is currently working as an intern for the City of Flagstaff and is developing an educational program for grocery store employees who provide plastic bags, teaching them simple things they can do to decrease the use of plastic bags and to increase the recycling of plastic bags they do provide to their customers.