

Digital Dilemma

If you watch TV at all, for the past year or so you have probably been aware of the banner on your screen announcing the arrival of digital TV on February 17, 2009.

What does this change from analog to a digital signal mean for the average person? If you subscribe to cable TV or have a satellite dish, the change will probably not impact you in the least. But if your TV is older and has an analog tuner or you use rabbit ears or an antenna to get reception, you have some decisions to make sure you don't miss a single episode of *American Idol*.

You may think you need to get a new TV. But wait...you don't have to! By using a converter box, you can continue to receive the broadcast signal. The boxes are available through major electronics retailers. For more information on the digital conversion, go to www.dtv.gov or call 1-888-Call-FCC.

If you do decide to get rid of your old TV and purchase a new one, be sure to recycle it. Some Connecticut towns and cities are currently offering electronic waste recycling at their transfer station. Eligible municipalities can also recycle their televisions through any of the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority (CRRRA) one-day collections. To see if your town is eligible for these collections, go to the CRRRA website, www.crra.org. Check with your municipal recycling contact to find out if there are any other options.

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If you can wait until fall 2009, you have another option. Connecticut municipalities will be required to provide for the safe and convenient collection of electronic waste, which includes televisions. The cost will be picked up by the manufacturers so there will be no cost for the towns and no fees can be charged to the residents. For more information, visit www.ct.gov/dep/recycle and click on "electronic waste."

Now, let's get back to the couch and the regularly scheduled programming...

Considering Buying a New TV?

There are about 275 million TVs currently in use in the U.S., consuming over 50 billion kWh of energy each year — or 4 percent of all households' electricity use. This is enough electricity to power all the homes in Connecticut for almost 5 years!



When shopping, look for the ENERGY STAR label — you can find it on everything from standard TVs to the largest flat-screen plasma TVs. ENERGY

STAR televisions use about 30% less energy. Be aware that even though that big new TV is ENERGY STAR qualified, it may use more electricity than your old one, depending on the type and size you choose. For example, a 50-inch plasma TV uses about 300 watts compared to 100 watts for a 32-inch LCD model. Visit www.energystar.gov for more information.

And remember — don't trash that old TV, recycle it.

Moving to the Head of the Class



This is a win-win story about how one town and its taxpayers saved a bunch of money and got their kids to do all the work. Well, that might be a bit of an exaggeration, but read on.

The Town of West Hartford has sixteen schools and more than ten thousand students. It costs over 110 million dollars to run those schools, with a fair amount going to utility costs. During the month of November 2008, all of the schools took the **Conservation Challenge**, and in just one month every school reduced its energy use by more than 10%. **The town and the taxpayers saved \$31,586 and the students learned that they can make a difference.** If they were getting graded, they'd have earned an A plus.

The idea of getting the kids involved and taking on a fun competition began with one parent, Heidi Golden. She brought the idea to a few community advocates and then met with school principals, the Assistant Superintendent, town council members and others, and the light bulb went on. (Or did it go off?) Together with a committee that also included the Facilities Manager and Information Technology staff, the Conservation Challenge was launched.

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Moving to the Head of the Class

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There was a lot of planning that went into the Challenge by parents, school administrators, teachers and staff before the kids got their hands on it. A brochure was developed with details about the program as well as suggestions of energy saving actions that can be taken at school and at home.

The brochure was sent home with every student. **A website was created so that energy use could be tracked by everyone.** Each day, each of the 16 schools took meter readings that were posted on the website. Families were also asked to take an on-line survey that covered home energy and water use, recycling and transportation. These three tools helped raise awareness and concern for the environment and inspired participation at school and at home.

Each school was able to promote the Challenge any way they wanted, choosing to kick it off with an all-school meeting, or an announcement over the loud speaker; some had scout troops make signs, others used the program poster. **In one school, the principal did some energy policing and put sticky notes on any computers left on.** It turns out that given the chance, West Hartford students were not only up to the Challenge but every school exceeded it! At the end of the month, the goal was met, everyone had fun, the students were empowered, money was saved and school communities learned how little changes in behavior can go a long way. The committee will continue monitoring energy use in the schools and begin to think about expanding the Conservation Challenge to other resources, like water use and waste.

Some of the most common things that contributed to the reduction of 185,000 kilowatt hours included:

- **Lighting** — Turning off lights in any rooms not in use, using natural day lighting when possible, and having maintenance staff remove some light bulbs from areas that were over-lit.
- **Computers** — Turning computers off, including those in the Media Center or school library, when not being used and learning that when the screen saver is on, the computer and monitor are still using energy. To really save energy, put computers to sleep either manually or using power management software (annually, this saves \$4,000 per 100 computers) and turn off the monitor.
- **Appliances and equipment** — Eliminate using mini-refrigerators in individual classrooms by using one, main refrigerator in a central location like teachers' lounge or cafeteria. Unplugging or turning off copiers and printers at the end of the day.

Check out the website at www.whps.org/conservationchallenge for all the materials and data, tips and facts, then, challenge the kids in your town to reduce energy use.

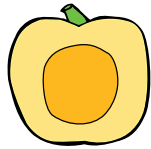




Cool Food



What do you get when you mix a bunch of carrots, some onions, butternut squash, and apples? If you guessed Connecticut Grown foods available throughout the winter, then you got it right. (If you guessed a soup, chutney or casserole, well, you're also right.)



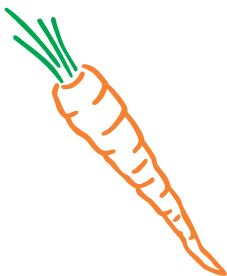
CitySeed's Farmers' Market in New Haven is open year-round.

Many of us still think that once November comes along the farmers' markets close up and we can only fill our shopping carts with food from faraway places. Things are changing; schools, restaurant chefs, and people like us are all starting to think more about where our food comes from. We not only want the freshness and taste of food grown nearby, but we're becoming aware of the benefits to Connecticut farmers and the negative impacts transporting food far distances has on the environment.

Sure, the variety of local fruits and vegetables available in Connecticut is limited during the winter but farmers and food distributors are coming up with clever ways to bring them to us, like using cold storage for late season produce (apples, pears and cabbage), and growing greens indoors, like Two Guys from Woodbridge in Hamden, Starlight Gardens in Durham, and Urban Oaks in New Britain. There are even a handful of farmer's markets throughout the state that will be open this winter (Fairfield, New London, Litchfield, New Haven, Stonington, Mansfield, and Middletown).

So, what do you get when you have a dozen eggs, milk, cheese, and some meat or seafood? Well, fruits and vegetables aren't the only Connecticut Grown items — these other foods are available all year long, as well as breads, herbs and specialty foods.

So, before you put that item in your shopping cart, see if you can get a Connecticut Grown product instead.



A list of Farmer's Markets open this winter is available at www.ct.gov/doag — click on "Winter Farmers Markets."

A brochure with Connecticut farms and the products their products is at http://www.ct.gov/doag/lib/doag/pdf/2007_ct_organic_farms.pdf





Trayless Eating 101

Have you ever been to one of those all-you-can-eat restaurants where you pick up a tray and pile it high with tempting selections you can't refuse or possibly consume? After seeing all the leftover food on your plates, your mother would probably say that your eyes were bigger than your belly!

This scene is replayed at every meal at college dining halls and some food service providers think they have a solution to it — looking for ways to contain the escalating costs of feeding the college community, cut waste disposal fees and conserve energy and water, hundreds of food service operations across the country are removing the food tray from campus dining areas.

Aramark, a food service provider for more than 500 campuses in the U.S., found that **removing the tray reduced the per person waste from 3.0 ounces to 1.8 ounces per meal.** They also found that it takes between a 1/3 – 1/2 gallon of water to wash one tray, plus the cost of detergent, drying agents and energy used to heat the wash water.

In the spring 2008, UCONN Dining Services decided to jump on the bandwagon. With the help of CONNPIRG and Eco Huskies (UCONN Office of Environmental Policy), they developed a program to pilot trayless dining for one meal per day in one dining hall for one week. At the end of the pilot, staff estimated **they saved 760 pounds of food from being wasted and conserved 913 gallons of water.** In the fall 2008, they removed trays from 7 of the 8 cafeterias at the Storrs campus. Since UCONN serves 130,000 meals per week the savings and environmental benefits can be substantial.

But change is not always easy and the trayless system at many campuses, including UCONN, has some problems that needed to be addressed. Denise Beal, Assistant Food Service Director at UCONN said that they took care of student complaints about juggling plates and spillage by placing silverware in more than one location and putting plates and cups closer to the food. Staff has been reassigned to clean spilled food and remove plates from tables. Beal said that the system is a big success and **has benefits beyond being "green" — it is also supported by the University's nutritionist because students may eat less and avoid putting on extra pounds.**

UCONN Dining Services is taking sustainability of its dining services beyond the trayless system. They have eliminated a lot of paper waste by installing dispensers that dole out napkins one at a time and they serve as much local food as possible, including honey from their own bees.

Aramark estimates that over 50% of their collegiate clients will be trayless next year. So this is a trend that is likely to continue. It just might extend to your kid's school cafeteria, your cafeteria at work and maybe that all-you-can-eat restaurant.

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Let's hear from you! We'd like to know what you think about going trayless — good for the environment or an inconvenience? What to do with all those unused trays? Maybe lunch tray tobogganing can become a collegiate sport! E-mail your thoughts to judith.prill@ct.gov.

Food Waste Facts

- Food leftovers are the single-largest component of the waste stream by weight in the US. Americans throw away more than 25 percent of the food we prepare, about 96 billion pounds of food waste each year.
- In 2007, almost 12.5% of the total municipal solid waste generated in US households was food scraps and less than 3% was recovered. The rest was thrown away and disposed in landfills or combusted in incinerators.

Source: <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/consERVE/materials/organics/food/fd-basic.htm>

For more information:

- Business and Cultural Acceptance of Trayless Dining, Aramark, July 2008. <http://www.aramarkhighered.com/pdfs/articles/ARAMARK%20Trayless%20Dining%20July%202008%20FINAL.PDF>
- UCONN Dining Services, <http://www.dining.uconn.edu/>
- Eco Huskies, UCONN Office of Environmental Policy <http://www.ecohusky.uconn.edu/article.html>
- CONNPIRG, <http://www.connpirg.org/>

Chippy the Recycling Chipmunk

The Girl Scouts of Troop #10809 in Glastonbury wanted to teach the community — children, teachers and parents — about how important it is to recycle to help our environment. So the scouts came up with a fun project to earn their Girl Scout Bronze Award and accomplish this goal.

The nine girls in the troop, ages 10-11, created a book entitled **Chippy, the Recycling Chipmunk**. In the story, Chippy visits different areas of a school to make sure that the proper items are being recycled. Each scout wrote and illustrated a page that covers one of the 11 items that are required to be recycled in Connecticut. The colorful book is full of facts and includes a fun section where readers can hunt for "hidden" details.

The troop donated the book to each of the six elementary school libraries in town and to the Connecticut Audubon Society of Glastonbury. The girls would like you to help Chippy continue to spread the word about the importance of recycling — "Tell your family and friends and together let's make a difference!" To see a copy of the book, contact Bea Milne at beatriz.milne@ct.gov.



Ask Eartha

Dear Eartha:

I have been tempted to buy those toilet bowl cleaners with a flushable brush. The ads on TV make them seem like they work great and are convenient to use. But is it really okay for the environment to flush the brush?

Eileen W., Coventry, CT

Disposable wipes have become very popular in recent years. There are wipes to clean just about everything (and everybody) in the house — from disinfecting the kitchen countertop and polishing the furniture to removing your makeup and wiping the baby's bottom. Now there are even disposable wipes designed to work like a toilet bowl brush. Some of these products are marketed as flushable or biodegradable.

Although these disposable wipes are convenient, they cause problems when flushed. Over the last few years, wastewater

pump stations have experienced an increase in the amount of rag-like material, causing their pumps to malfunction. Crews have to regularly unclog mounds of this material, much of which consists of disposable wipes. Even though some of these wipes may have been marketed as flushable or biodegradable, they do not break down fast enough to make it through the wastewater process.

If a pump clogs up, wastewater can back up into homes and overflow into rivers and Long Island Sound (not to mention the extra cost to communities for overtime and

Eartha answers selected environmental questions. Email your question to judith.prill@ct.gov and watch future issues for your answer.

Greening Electronics

DEP marked America Recycles Day by joining the Northeast States Electronics Challenge (SEC) to reduce the environmental impact of electronics products that we purchase, use and need to replace.

Commissioner Gina McCarthy said, "DEP is offering an example of the type of actions everyone can take to make a real difference for our environment and to reduce the amount of waste we generate. Through the Northeast States Electronic Challenge DEP is committed to purchasing 'greener' computer products, taking steps to reduce the energy demands and impact of computers during use and making certain that we properly manage the disposition of obsolete equipment."

For example, it is estimated that for every 1,000 "green" computers purchased and recycled, DEP will:

- Reduce electricity equivalent to the amount of power used by 101 households annually;
- Decrease greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to eliminating 71 passenger cars from the roads per year;
- Avoid municipal solid waste equivalent to the amount generated by 18 households annually;
- Decrease hazardous waste by 17 metric tons; and
- Avoid the use of 340 pounds of toxic materials, including lead and mercury.



equipment repair!) Even if you have a septic system, you shouldn't flush wipes down the toilet. They can cause your system to prematurely fail, which can cost you thousands of dollars to repair or replace.

What Should I Do?

Flush only toilet paper and human waste down your toilet. Even wipes or other cleaning products labeled "Flushable" and "Biodegradable" do not break down fast enough and can cause problems in the wastewater process. Throw all types of disposable wipes in the trash instead.

Clean your toilet with a reusable brush and an environmentally preferable cleaning product.

For more information, visit www.ct.gov/dep/p2 and click on the link "Recipe Card for Making Your Own Green Cleaners."

What's
NEW
in P2?



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
 DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
 79 Elm Street
 Hartford, CT 06106-5127
www.ct.gov/dep
 Gina McCarthy, Commissioner


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P 2 C A L E N D A R

A SELECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

February 18, 2009

**Small Scale Wind Generation
 Smart Living Center, Orange**

Informative seminar will focus on residential, small business and community center/governmental building installations. To register, call the Smart Living Center at (203) 799-0460.

**February 28 – March 21
 or March 31 – April 21, 2009**

**Home Energy Saver Program
 Smart Living Center, Orange**

Participants will learn how to perform an energy audit, calculate the payback for efficiency upgrades and find out about tax incentives and rebates. For more information on this program offered through Gateway Community College, go to page 60 in the Spring 2009 Continuing Education catalog at www.gwctc.commnet.edu or call the Smart Living Center at (203) 799-0460.

February 21, 2009

**Cultivating an Organic Connecticut
 Windsor High School, Windsor**

Conference will have workshops, an organic marketplace and potluck lunch. Keynote speakers are Ian Marvey, Red Hook Community Farm and Dan Ross, Nuestras Raices. For more information, visit www.ctnofa.org or call (203) 888-5146.

April 23, 2009

**Vegetative Roof Systems
 NRCA University, Boston MA**

This course is for roofing contractors, design professionals, architects and anyone else who is interested in learning how to properly install, design and maintain vegetative roof systems. Topics include benefits, waterproofing membranes and construction details, growth media and vegetation, code compliance, and business and legal issues associated with vegetative roofs. For more information, visit www.CTGBC.org