

TrashMasters!™  
**SUPER**Recyclers



Elementary Division  
Manhattan Borough  
& Citywide Winner

**The Anderson School  
PS 334**

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF SANITATION

# 2010 GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS

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Department of Sanitation, John J. Doherty, Commissioner  
Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling, Robert Lange, Director

  
John J. Doherty, Commissioner  
June, 2010

## *Trash Masters! - Super Recyclers*

### **THE ANDERSON SCHOOL PS334**

#### **K-5**

##### **I. BACKGROUND**

The Anderson School (K-8) relocated from within PS 9 on W. 84<sup>th</sup> St. to the O'Shea Complex/MS44 building on W. 77<sup>th</sup> Street in August, 2009. As part of the move, the school administration and parents were committed to make the new school more environmentally sustainable. Having two contiguous floors of the new building and being the largest school within O'Shea gave Anderson the ability to implement programs we were not able to implement before. Implementing our new vision of sustainability began with the move, as Anderson staff and parent volunteers culled through old papers and books and recycled anything no longer usable. We also worked with DOE/Facilities staff to ensure that environmentally responsible packing materials were used whenever possible to minimize waste.

When we arrived at the O'Shea Complex, there was no discernible recycling program in the building. There were no recycling containers or signage in any of the empty Anderson classrooms or offices or in the cafeteria (except for the kitchen). Anderson's Principal, Assistant Principal and parents were committed to start a comprehensive recycling collection program. Our goal for the first year was to establish a recycling program in Anderson to collect the materials required by the DOS and DOE. In 2010-2011, we hope to collaborate with the other schools in the building to expand the recycling program to the entire O'Shea complex. After that, our next goal for a sustainable Anderson will be to expand the basic recycling program to include promoting waste reduction and energy conservation measures both within the school and at home in 2010-11. This will include promoting reusable water bottles and lunch containers, and implementing monthly collections of reusable items to donate to charitable organizations.

Before we began our recycling program, we began to lay the groundwork within the Anderson community for our new environmentally responsible vision for the school by changing the annual Fall Festival to an EcoFest. At the October 3<sup>rd</sup> festival, there were several artists leading recycled arts & crafts projects for kids; a composting demonstration; a rummage sale where people donated used clothing, books, toys, etc. for sale; a recycle-toss game to teach kids what materials went in which color can; the sale of Anderson logo water bottles to promote the switch from disposable to reusable water bottles within the school community; and, an information table with DOS recycling and waste reduction educational materials. The positive energy generated by the EcoFest was the springboard used to launch the first phase of our recycling program.

## II. DESCRIPTION OF ANDERSON'S CURRENT RECYCLING PROGRAM

In October 2009, Mr. Robert Moy, K-3 Science Teacher volunteered to serve as the Anderson Sustainability Coordinator. He coordinated the site visit from DOS and ordered educational materials. Mr. Moy spoke at the monthly Principal's Breakfast in January to answer other teachers' questions about the recycling program and he remains their point of contact for information and curriculum materials. He also frequently attends the UFT Green Schools committee meetings. Also in October, an Anderson Green Committee formed which includes parents, the Assistant Principal, and Mr. Moy.

### **Class Room Recycling:**

In October 2009, green and blue waste buckets were placed in every class room and administrative office at Anderson. The green buckets have DOS recycling decals for paper; The blue buckets have decals for metal/glass/plastic; The black trash cans have "trash only" decals on them. Teachers were instructed about which materials go in each bucket and they in turn educated their classes. Students were given book marks, refrigerator magnets and the DOS comic books to take home to reinforce the new program.

The younger grades still have snack in the morning, and collect many juice boxes and beverage containers in the blue buckets; The upper grades collect mostly paper. In addition to recycling white paper, each class has a "scrap bin" where students are instructed to place paper used only on one side and to reuse the paper for drawings.

From the twelve K-4<sup>th</sup> grade classes and administrative offices on the first floor of the building, Matthew, the first floor custodian reports collecting one large bag of mixed paper, and one large bag of metal/glass/plastic each day. Participation is not perfect. If anything, students and teachers are so eager to recycle, they often place non-recyclable plastic such as yogurt containers in the blue buckets. With similar zest for recycling, students often place paper towels and tissues in the green buckets. At the end of the day, Matthew cheerfully puts on his work gloves and removes most contamination from the classroom buckets before dumping them into the large collection container he pushes down the hallway. Teachers are given feedback to share with their class about what the students are doing wrong so they can improve.

### **Administrative Office - Big Bertha:**

A large multi-material collection container nicknamed "Big Bertha" was purchased and placed in the First Floor main administrative office. This helps office staff and visitors to the main office to easily recycle. Before Bertha, there was a lot of contamination in the recycling containers. Since Bertha, source separation has improved tremendously. The Assistant Principal's office on the Ground Floor houses "Big Bertha-2." Many "special" teachers such as art, gym, and Spanish utilize that office during their prep-periods and therefore throw their trash and recyclables in BB2.

### **Cafeteria - Lunch Room and Kitchen:**

The O'Shea Cafeteria serves free breakfast and lunch five days a week to students from four schools. Approximately 700 meals/day are served. Currently, the milk containers are the only recyclable part of the school breakfast/lunch. In addition to students who eat the school meals, students who bring lunch from home are also able to take milk for free each day. That means there were in excess of 700 milk containers thrown in the garbage each day prior to the start of the cafeteria recycling program.

The kitchen staff had already been recycling their metal and cardboard prior to Anderson moving to O'Shea. That process has remained unchanged. On average, they place 4 blue bags at the curb every other day. In addition, the kitchen recycles all the cardboard boxes in which the food is delivered, which is approximately 5 bags every other day.

Even though Anderson is only one of four schools in the O'Shea building, because we are the largest school in the building, we took the lead in organizing the cafeteria recycling program. This included asking the Anderson PTA for money to buy recycling containers. In early conversations with the cafeteria custodians, they expressed concern about the potential mess caused by the left over liquids in the recyclable beverage containers. In response to their concerns, the Anderson PTA authorized the purchase of small blue pails fitted with funnel tops, to be used for pouring excess liquids from recyclables beverage containers before placing them in the blue metal/glass/plastic buckets. The school purchased large blue containers to supplement what was already in the school (perhaps part of a pilot program decades ago).

The Lunch Room recycling program was launched on April 22, 2010, the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Earth Day. (see more description below in "Section III. Educational Programs/Student Involvement.") There are five recycling stations throughout the lunch room which include a grey garbage can, a blue recycling bucket, and a small funnel top container. Each station has a DOS recycling instructional poster and decal on the pillar closest to the can. Five stations is adequate for one school at a time. But due to the complexities of sharing a lunch room with 3 other school who each sit in a different part of the cafeteria during different periods, we are planning to increase the number of recycling stations to eight so that custodial staff and parent volunteers do not have to move cans around the room each lunch period. To date, three-five full bags of metal/glass/plastic (mostly milk containers) is collected in the lunch room each day. Having more recycling stations will likely increase our recycling rate and decrease contamination.

Parent volunteers called Learning Leaders (LLs) are essential to ensuring smooth lunch and recess periods, especially in the younger grades where students still need a lot of assistance. Approximately 5 LLs are stationed throughout the lunchroom during the K-4 lunch period. During Earth Week, the LLs were trained on the new cafeteria recycling program. Each Learning Leader received a recycling "cheat sheet" listing in detail what materials can and can't be recycled. Feedback from the LLs was very positive and they felt well prepared to assist the Trash Troopers if needed (see section III below).

### III. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS/ STUDENT INVOLVEMENT:

#### **Earth Week 2010**

##### Assemblies:

On Tuesday April 20<sup>th</sup>, Anderson conducted two 40 minute assemblies (K-3 & 4-8) to launch the expansion of the recycling program to the cafeteria. Assistant Principal Dr. Terosky led the assemblies, and began by announcing the start of the cafeteria recycling program scheduled for Earth Day. That was followed by showing the 8 minute DOS video "Recycling at School." The video was followed by a game show style quiz, led by one of our science teachers, where volunteers came up to the stage and were challenged to decide which material went in which can (blue, green, grey, funnel top). Students in the audience gave contestants a "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" to indicate if they thought they were correct or incorrect. All "contestants" received Anderson logo reusable water bottles.

##### Wear Green for Earth Day:

On April 22, 2010, all the students at Anderson wore green for Earth Day. This helped to raise school spirit and student awareness of environmental issues, and provided a platform for teachers to read related stories and discuss environmental themes with their classes.

##### Gym Classes:

To build on the momentum started during Earth Week, in May, the warm-up activity during Gym classes will be recycling relay races. Students' knowledge of recycling will be tested in a fun way when they compete to see who can sort the trash into the appropriate color cans the fastest.

##### Trash Troopers:

Also during Earth Week, Dr. Terosky re-trained the Anderson "Trash Troopers" (TTs). TT's are two students from each class who volunteered in the Fall to oversee the cleanliness of the cafeteria at their table at the end of lunch period. Fifth grade Trash Troopers also patrol the ground floor hallway and collect and recycle paper litter (coming from lockers). They are now being re-trained to be their class liaison for recycling. Eager Trash Troopers were gathered together to learn about the expansion of the program to the cafeteria, and were taught about what materials went in each can. TTs asked many good questions about confusing plastics to help to clarify their understanding of the program. Then the test of their knowledge began, as they returned to their classes to teach their classmates.

In the cafeteria, beginning on Earth Day and continuing in perpetuity, Trash Troopers stand at each recycling station (along with staff and parent volunteers) during the "throw away your garbage" part of the lunch period to oversee the source separation/disposal process. They are there to remind their fellow students of what goes where and to answer any questions. Trash Troopers have requested rubber gloves so they can pull out contamination from the recycling containers (mainly Styrofoam trays in the blue bins). After learning that, additional students in each class are requesting to be Trash Troopers so they can pull garbage out of the blue cans too!

#### IV. SUMMARY *(why is our school a "Super Recycler"):*

We believe that Anderson K-5 is a "Super Recycler," in part because we had to overcome several logistical challenges this year in order to start the program we have today. First, we moved to a new building this school year. The O'Shea building is a very large building built in 1957 that had been under capacity for many years. It now houses four schools, and since Anderson is the largest school, it is expected that we take the lead in the Building Council. Yet, we were new to the building, and our Principal was new to the school. We had to quickly learn the building logistics, become familiar with the custodial/janitorial staff, and order all new supplies and equipment. In addition to starting a recycling program this year, we are building a library and a playground.

Our second big challenge was the fact that soon after the fall term started, we learned that our Head Custodian was being reassigned effective December 1<sup>st</sup>. (To date, we only have a part-time Head Custodian.) Anderson, being new to the building, would have benefited from the guidance of an experienced Head Custodian to help us establish a recycling program. In the absence of that leadership, the Anderson Assistant Principal worked closely with the building's janitorial staff. They have all been enormously supportive and cooperative. However, all would have benefited from an experienced and supportive Head Custodian.

Our third challenge is ensuring that the implementation of the recycling program is implemented in a way that reflects the "Anderson Way." That is, whenever possible, the students should play a large part in designing and implementing the program. There should be opportunities for learning and creativity, and ample opportunities for student involvement. The Trash Troopers is one example of how we involve the students in the programs with peer-to-peer learning. Involving students in the development and implementation of a program may translate to a slower start, but it ensures greater participation and ownership in the long-run.

In summary, in a relatively short period of time (8 months), the Anderson School was able to establish a strong basic recycling collection program that includes collecting mixed paper and metal/glass/plastic beverage containers in class rooms and offices, metal cans and corrugated cardboard boxes in the kitchen, and metal/glass/plastic beverage containers and foil in the cafeteria. We now have the potential to capture and recycle more than 700 milk cartons a day. Students trained as "Trash Troopers" help to police the recycling buckets in their classrooms and the cafeteria, and help teach their class how and what to recycle. A variety of educational activities were implemented throughout the year to reinforce the recycling program, culminating with school-wide assemblies on Earth Day. In the 2010-2011 school year, we plan to continue to improve our recycling diversion rates and decrease contamination through on-going education programs. In addition, we will collaborate with the other schools in the building to expand recycling to all floors of the O'Shea Complex. We also plan to expand our focus to include implementing re-use and waste reduction strategies in 2010-2011. This can include promoting the use of reusable beverage and lunch containers, and collaborating with other public schools to explore more environmentally responsible alternatives to the Styrofoam cafeteria tray.

**V. PHOTOGRAPHS & EXHIBITS:**

**Please see the following photo pages.**



**Children throughout the O'Shea Complex wore green on Earth Day. This is a First Grade Anderson class, before hearing a story about the first Earth Day.**



In Art class, Fifth Grade students drew environmental-themed posters that were entered into a contest. Several had recycling and waste reduction themes (two are featured on the cover of the binder). All the posters are displayed on the Ground Floor hallway.

Fifth Grade students decorated a bulletin board immediately outside the cafeteria so that all students would be reminded to recycle on their way into breakfast and lunch.





### TRASH TROOPERS

Assistant Principal Terosky re-trained Anderson Trash Troopers on Earth Day. Then the Trash Troopers went into their class rooms to train their peers about the new cafeteria recycling program.



## EARTH DAY 2010

### The Cafeteria Recycling Program is Launched!

3 containers are placed at every recycling station;

Middle School students assist by hanging posters and decals.





Trash Troopers stand at each recycling station at the end of each lunch period.

Below, a First Grade Trash Trooper shows his classmate where to place his snack bag (in the garbage can!)





Students pour left over liquids from their beverage containers into small blue buckets fitted with funnel tops. This reduces the contamination in the blue recycling can. The funnel top on the slop bucket container helps to reduce spillage and safety hazards in the cafeteria

We now have the potential to collect for recycling more than 700 milk cartons a day in the cafeteria.





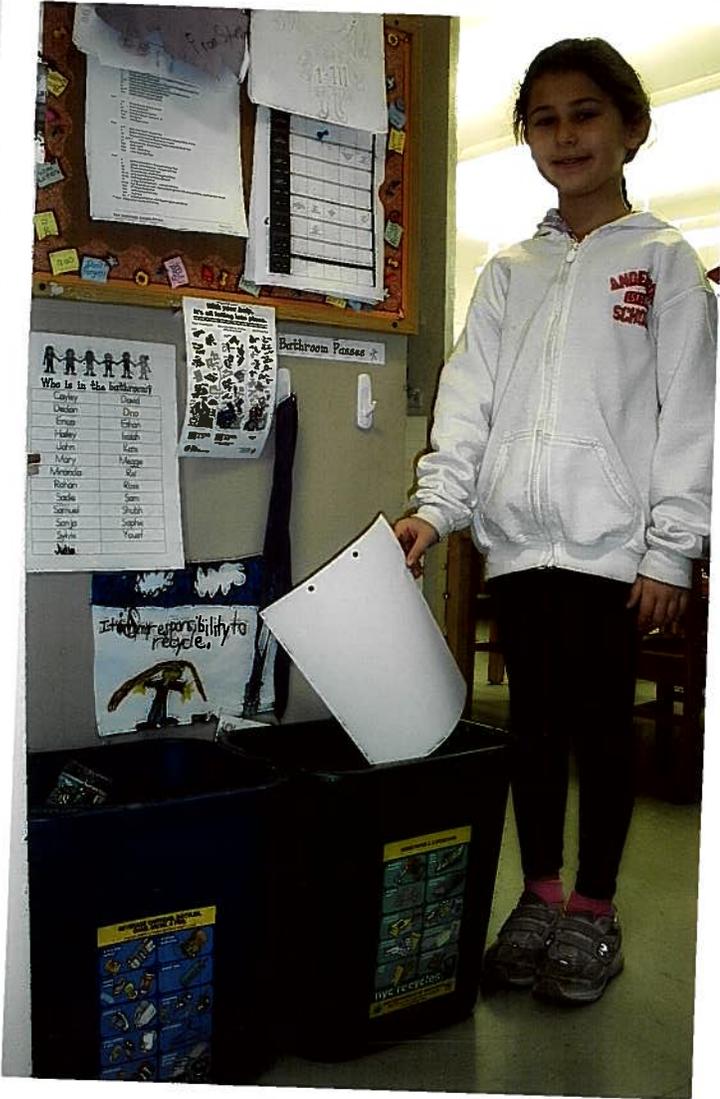
Kitchen recycling at O'Shea pre-dates Anderson. Large metal food service cans are collected in a blue recycling bucket.



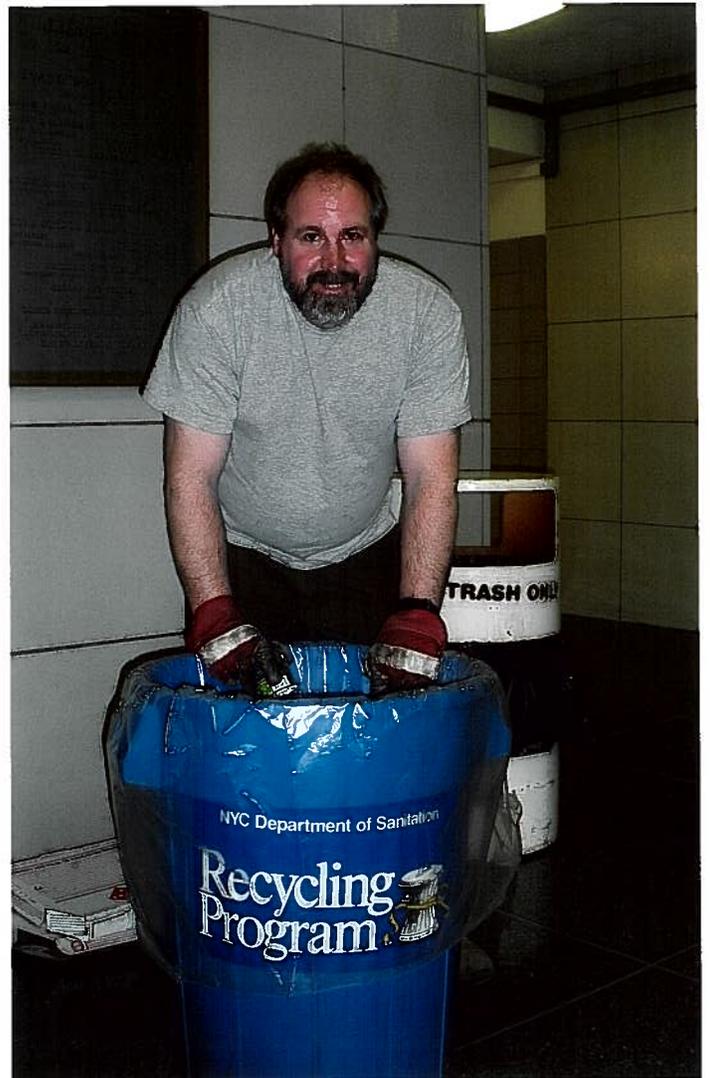
Kitchen staff bag the metal cans and cardboard boxes (separately) and place them at the curb for collection. They estimate that 4 bags of metal cans and 5 bags of cardboard are collected every two days.



Every classroom (and office) has a blue bucket and green bucket for recycling. Recycling containers have decals on them indicating what materials to recycle in each can.



Matthew, the first floor janitor, is a true partner when it comes to recycling. He dons his work gloves and pulls out contamination whenever the students make a mistake about what goes where.



## Big Bertha!

The Main Office on the First Floor and the Assistant Principal's Office on the Ground Floor are home to Big Bertha and Big Bertha 2. Contamination has decreased in the recycling containers in the offices since Bertha arrived.

