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Ministry of Environment

Students remember the three Rs on Earth Day: Do you?

VANCOUVER - Students at Vancouver's Windermere Secondary School are inviting their neighbours to break out the superhero costumes and pedal-powered parade floats as they launch a giant parade and celebration today to get people excited about reducing, reusing and recycling on Earth Day.

It's Vancouver's first Earth Day event organized by students for students and families. Their goal is to reinvigorate the roots of Earth Day as a celebration and inspiration. The festival starts with a parade down Commercial Drive to Britannia Secondary School, where students have organized a community festival including live music, Earth Day-themed speakers, contests, and family-friendly activities.

The students expect 4,000 people to attend and hope they leave with an awareness of the climate challenges facing the planet and a commitment to making small changes every day. Windermere has a green focus throughout the school year with climate-friendly programs including an organic garden and a robust recycling program. Recycling is one of the easiest ways to make every day Earth Day and everyone from students to corporations have a role to play.

B.C. is a leader in North America when it comes to reducing, reusing and recycling. B.C.'s groundbreaking Recycling Regulation makes industry responsible for managing what happens to their products once the consumer is done using them. That includes collecting and recycling. This regulation has led to the environmentally sound management of over 120,000 tonnes of solid materials every year with glass, tires and plastic accounting for about 90 per cent.

In addition, many municipalities across British Columbia offer curbside collection of recycling or other options at recycling and collections centres. The private sector also offers a variety of recycling services located at multi-material collection depots located across B.C.

By dropping pop cans and juice bottles into blue bins, British Columbians have kept more than nine billion beverage containers out of landfills. Instead, those cans became cans again; juice boxes became cardboard; plastic bottles were transformed into pellets; and glass bottles were refilled or recycled into fibreglass and sandblasting material. Students at Windermere have found one more use for them: inspired by the story of a man in Malawi who built a wind turbine from scrap with almost no tools, they've collected bottles to build a giant windmill to use as a float in their Earth Day parade.

B.C. recycling programs can keep many common items out of the landfill, but recycling shouldn't be the only option. One of the best ways to reduce waste and greenhouse gas emissions is to simply use less in the first place. Do this by purchasing goods that are more durable and last longer, by re-using items through share programs, or by purchasing used items.

To see a video of Environment Minister Terry Lake and award-winning children's duo Bobs & Lolo talking about recycling on Earth Day, please go to: <http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2011/04/students-remember-the-three-rs-on-earth-day-do-you.html>

Quotes:

Minister of Environment Terry Lake:

"The students at Windermere Secondary School are a real inspiration. They are teaching us how small, individual actions can become collective actions that reduce our impact on the planet. B.C. has enjoyed huge success diverting waste for recycling and creating small business opportunities and green jobs through product stewardship programs. But each of us can do even more for the environment by purchasing products that produce less waste and make sure we recycle as much as possible."

Windermere Secondary School principal Rob Schindel:

"The students have been phenomenal in using their leadership skills to bring everyone together. What started as an idea has blossomed into a network of caring students creating awareness of climate change. It's comforting to know we have youth going out into the world with the knowledge and passion to lead us where we need to go."

Windermere Secondary School Grade 12 student and parade organizer Emily Chan:

"It's really empowering to be organizing this together. We want to get back the excitement of Earth Day and remind people that there is so much we can do together. Earth Day is a perfect day to create a movement because people are already thinking about the planet and what they can do to help."

Quick Facts:

- * Windermere Secondary School's Earth Day parade begins at 11 a.m. on Commercial Drive just north of the Broadway/Commercial Skytrain Station.
- * Impacts of the BC Recycling Regulation:
 - o Employment generated directly by industry by meeting its stewardship responsibilities is estimated at 1,600 positions in direct employment and a further 500 created indirectly for a combined total of some 2,100 full-time equivalent positions.
 - o Diverting hazardous waste materials to stewardship management provided significant benefits to landfill operations as well as to the broader society in British Columbia. Benefits include reduced landfill costs, avoided contamination and avoided subsequent remedial clean-up costs from improperly disposed products.
 - o Over 51 million litres of used oil, solvents, flammables, pesticides and gasoline were collected and responsibly managed within the industry product stewardship programs.
 - o Increased recycling of products within B.C. industry product stewardship programs reduced roughly 267,000 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent and saved 5.3 million gigajoules of energy relative to land filling. Aluminum cans and tires account for about 82 per cent of this.
- * These reductions are equivalent to saving:
 - * 72,950 passenger cars removed from the roadway each year

- * 858,913 barrels of oil
- * 150,776,044 litres of gasoline

Learn More at:

Information on the Windermere Secondary School Earth day parade is on the Vancouver School Board website at www.vsb.bc.ca/calendars-events/earth-day-parade

For more information on the rules of recycling in B.C., visit:
www.recycling.gov.bc.ca

Info about where to take a variety of recyclables is available on the Recycling Council of B.C.'s Recyclepedia at: www.rcbc.bc.ca. For products not listed in the Recyclepedia, RCBC offers a recycling hotline at 604-RECYCLE (732-9253) in the Lower Mainland or 1 800 667-4321 in the rest of B.C.

To find out if your community has curbside collection or other recycling options, visit: <http://rcbc.bc.ca/education/curbside-programs>

To access one of RCBC's sites for swapping used materials and products, visit: www.bc.reuses.com

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