

From Paper to Flowerpots: Thayer County Cooperative Extension Agency

Hebron, Nebraska

Elementary school children in Hebron, Nebraska, are learning about reuse and recycling while enriching the lives of “adopted grandparents” at elder care communities. For more than a decade, sixth-graders in three counties have been making flowerpots for the elderly out of recycled paper that they have made themselves. More than 100 students from six classrooms at public, private, and parochial schools participate in the program each year.

Crystal Fangmeier of the Thayer County Cooperative Extension Agency developed the program to show children that “just because you throw something away, that doesn’t mean it’s gone.” First, the students learn about the concepts of recycling and reuse.

Then, with used shredded paper from a local hospital, they create paper pulp. Using little cups as molds, they shape the paper pulp into starter pots, let them dry for a week, and plant flowers for their adopted grandparents. The students enjoy telling the recipients about recycling and explaining how they made the pots.

The success of the project is evidenced by the large amount of interest it has garnered from outside organizations hoping to launch similar projects. In addition, many students continue reusing paper in creative ways after the program ends, such as by coloring their own wrapping paper.

Contact:

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Project Spotlight

- **Project Type:** Recycling and reuse
- **Age Level:** Elementary
- **Scale of Participation:** Classroom, small group
- **Learning Objectives:** To show young students how everyday materials can be recycled into something useful rather than being thrown away
- **Duration:** Ongoing
- **Available Partnership Opportunities:** Schools, elderly care organizations, hospitals, community service organizations, nonprofit organizations



Field Trip Destinations:

- LA Recycling: Search for recycling centers near you with this link. Call the center individually to see if they offer tours and how to arrange a visit.
 - <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/BevContainer/Recyclers/Directory/Default.aspx?lang=en-US>
 - Example: Allan Co. in Santa Monica offers tours (contact Andrew at 310-458-8916)

- Sanitary Landfills
 - Calabasas Landfill (818) 889-0363
 - Living near a landfill is not pleasant... Reducing, Reusing and Recycling is better than throwing it in the trash!!
 - <https://www.theacorn.com/articles/calabasas-landfill-causes-a-stink/>
 - Scholl Canyon Landfill (818) 243-9779
 - Natural Gas production landfill
 - The Scholl Canyon Golf and Tennis Club was built in 1993, by the American Golf Corp. based in Santa Monica. Constructed on top of the northwest part of the landfill in the San Rafael Hills. The newer layout replaced a golf facility that was **closed in 1989 after dangerous levels of methane were released from under the golf course.**

- Senior homes (part of the project itself is delivering the flowerpots to the elderly!). Contact the following list of possible senior homes to see if they are interested in being recipients for your project's products.
 - ANY OF LOS ANGELES' SENIOR CITIZEN CENTERS:
 - <https://www.laparks.org/sec>
 - Watts Senior Citizen Center WATTS.SENIORCENTER@LACITY.ORG
 - Hollenbeck Palms (Boyle Heights)
 - <https://www.hollenbeckpalms.com/contact-us/>
 - Raya's Paradise (West Hollywood)
 - moti@rayasparadise.com
 - Beverly Hills Loving Care (Pico-Robertson)
 - (310) 652-6908
 - Kingsley Manor Retirement Community (East Hollywood)
 - <http://kingsleymanor.org/contact-us/>
 - Eilat's Manor (Pico-Robertson)
 - (310) 309-0405
 - Foothill Retirement Care Home (Tujunga)

- foothillretirementcarehome@gmail.com
- Silverado Beverly Place Memory Care Community
 - See website <https://www.silverado.com>
- Fireside Health Care Center (Santa Monica)
 - tmitchell@firesidecare.com



Resources for Students, by Students

Created by Renata Robins (18 years, Palisades Charter High School)