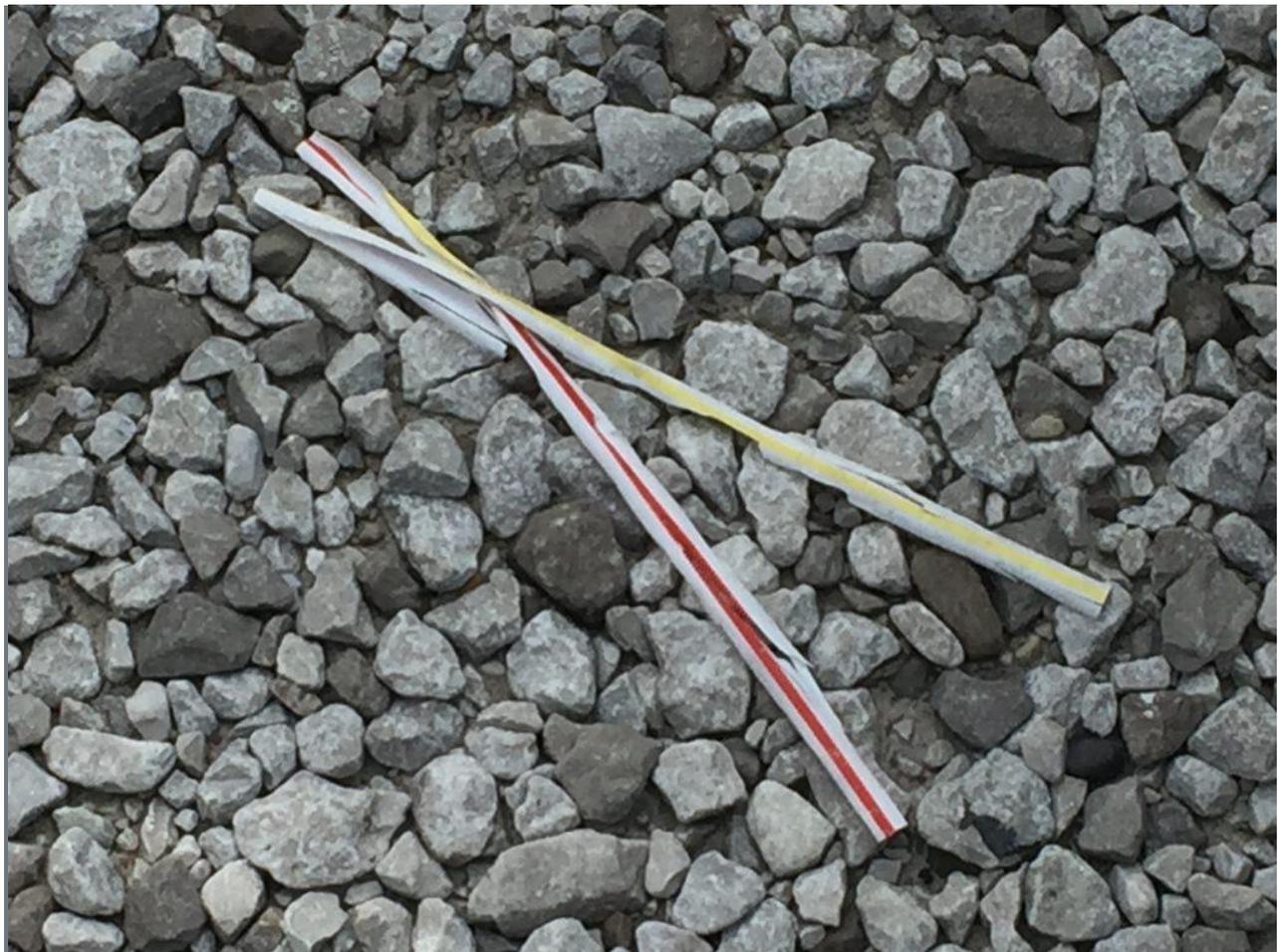


Food Services Expands Its Sustainability Practices, One Straw at a Time

Sunday, September 16, 2018, *By Greta Bush*

There's something missing this fall from all five campus dining centers. Don't worry: the chicken tenders are still there. But plastic straws are gone.



Fewer plastic straws in use mean fewer plastic straws discarded.

The plastic straw ban sweeping the nation has come to Syracuse University. *SU Food Services* opted to eliminate straws from all five of its residential dining centers (Brockway, Ernie Davis, Graham, Sadler and Shaw), starting when students returned for classes this fall. Why? Mark Tewksbury, director of residential dining and Dome operations, notes: "It's something easy to do that makes a big impact on the environment, so we decided it was the right decision."

Going straw-free in the dining centers may be trendy, but sustainability has long been incorporated into the department's routine.

Food Services composts its pre- and post-consumer waste with the Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency (OCRRA). Since the program's inception in 2010, Food Services has composted nearly 3,900 tons of pre- and post-consumer waste. It's a practice in which students can participate by sorting their leftover food scraps at the recycling station in each dining center. This, along with fruit and vegetable matter discarded during the food preparation process, is sent to OCRRA to be composted. Removing plastic straws from the dining centers will help make composting easier, as they are difficult to filter out of compostable waste when accidentally tossed into the composting bins.

In addition to the composting program, Food Services takes a number of steps to reduce waste:

- provides reusable water bottles to all first-year students to deter use of disposable cups: students can use the water bottle to take a drink to-go from all dining centers or receive 20 percent off their fountain beverage from a University café or food court.
- implemented reusable to-go containers in all five dining centers in 2009; in the 2017-18 academic year alone, students reused nearly 50,000 containers;
- incorporates energy- and water-saving equipment with each dining center renovation;
- buys products in bulk, where possible, to reduce material waste;
- sources locally produced products, whenever possible, from nearby vendors such as Upstate Farms, Paul deLima, Hofmann Sausage Co. and Byrne Dairy;
- donates leftover food from events to the Syracuse Rescue Mission;
- and partners with Red's Best, a seafood wholesaler in the Northeast that guarantees the fish caught will be purchased; this balances the supply-and-demand gap that typically drives fishermen to throw out fish that aren't in high demand; Food Services' sous chef Adam Harvey has created a flexible list of recipes tailored for the variety of fish purchased from Red's Best.

SU and SUNY-ESF students pitch in, too, by partnering with Food Services to reduce waste. The Food Recovery Network is a student-run organization where students volunteer to collect unused food from all five of SU's dining centers, Schine Dining and the Trailhead Café at SUNY-ESF. This food is safely packaged and delivered to local agencies in the greater Syracuse community that serve populations in need. Students make the rounds five days a week, up to four times per day. More than 70,000 pounds of food have been redistributed since the program's inception in 2014.

To learn more about Food Services' efforts to reduce waste and increase its sustainability practices, check out [*this video*](#) or visit foodservices.syr.edu.