



## Press Release

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***For Immediate Release***  
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### **Pennsbury School District Holds First Zero Waste Day**

**(Fallsington, PA)** – On Thursday, February 17, the Pennsbury School District held its first-ever Zero Waste Day. With over 12,000 students and staff members in 16 buildings, and over 150 vehicles, the district is essentially a small city, and its environmental impact can be substantial. Last year, Pennsbury generated 1,367 tons of trash, and sadly only 14% of it was recycled.

Zero Waste Day was the idea of Ms. Rowland's students at Quarry Hill Elementary School. Their idea gained the support of Ms. Cohoon's students from Fallsington and Oxford Valley Elementary Schools who are participating in the Philadelphia Zoo's Unless Contest, a year-long, project-based contest that encourages students to create real solutions to environmental issues in their lives. Add the backing of Dr. Smith, Superintendent of Schools, and Waste Management, a Pennsbury Partner and supporter of the Pennsbury Education Foundation, and the eco-friendly dream team was born.

"Aiming for zero waste means using materials and products with reuse and recycling in mind," said Dr. Smith, Superintendent of Schools.

For Zero Waste Day, Pennsbury challenged its students, staff, and community to pay attention to the materials used on a daily basis, only use reusable items versus disposable items that end up in landfills, and not to make copies or print anything unless it was essential or the task couldn't be completed on a computer.

"Last year, the Pennsbury School District used over 12,600 sheets of paper. That's about 1,250 sheets of paper for every student," shared Dr. Smith.

A lot of attention is also being paid to reducing single-use plastics in Pennsbury. Staff and students are encouraged to bring reusable water bottles and fill them at one of the over 40 bottle filling stations throughout the district. John Mormando, a fifth-grader at Fallsington Elementary School, was particularly passionate about this issue.

"We read an article in class, and it was about the North Pacific Garbage Patch. These patches of garbage are so big. It said in the article there are two of these patches in one gyre. These patches are each two times the size of Texas. So, combined, they are four times the size of Texas. And, they have been there for so long because they're in the middle of the North Pacific Ocean, which is the biggest ocean. So that's where a lot of trash is going. They've been there for so long the plastic has had time to decompose. It's creating microplastics, which, if you scoop them up, it's just going to also catch other microorganisms, which is extremely deadly to the environment because these organisms are key in the ecosystem. All of this trash is affecting every animal. They say plastic is the number one thing that is damaging marine life. So, plastic is very, very horrible."

John Mormando's teacher, Ms. Cohoon, said one of her students' goals through the Philadelphia Zoo's Unless Contest is to teach people how to properly recycle and educate the public about the six "R's" of sustainability - refuse, reuse, reduce, rethink, recycle, repair.

"We know that by making some changes in our district buildings, we can really have a huge impact on our entire community," said Ms. Cohoon. "We know that much of what our students learn in school, they tend to bring home with them."

Pennsbury's food service provider, The Nutrition Group, also supported the district's efforts by using biodegradable trays and flatware on Zero Waste Day. Plastic straws were only available upon request.

The district plans to work more closely with Waste Management to incorporate sustainability into its educational and facilities practices to the maximum extent possible. Waste Management recently donated \$25,000 to the Pennsbury Education Foundation through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development Education Improvement Tax Credit Program. The funds will be made available to Pennsbury teachers through grants designed for innovative school, classroom, and curricular enhancements. The Pennsbury Education Foundation approves the grants on a semi-annual basis. Waste Management has been supporting Pennsbury's educational and environmental programs for more than 25 years.

"We greatly appreciate the continued support of Waste Management as we work to improve our environmental efforts in Pennsbury and the community," said Dr. Smith. "We believe that small,

daily choices make a big difference when practiced by many people. We look forward to expanding our efforts in the future."

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