



Newsletter, #55 Fall 2019

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Fall Program Features Information About Solar Energy

Henry McKay, director of Solar United Neighbors Program shared much information about solar installations and outlined opportunities for financial benefit to attendees on Friday October 11 at 7 pm at the Blue Spruce Lodge. Indiana County Neighborhood Solar Co-op is the most successful one in the state with the most installations to date.

Those attending McKay's power point presentation asked pointed questions demonstrating that solar for farmers, businesses, homeowners and communities is something to consider now – not ten years down the road.

Solar Tour in Indiana

Evergreen also sponsored a solar tour in Indiana with the Sustainable Indiana County Task Force. We had about 14 enthusiastic participants who traveled to 6 different solar installations of all different sizes and shapes, ground and roof mounts. The tour ended at Culpeppers for an hour informational session with two of the installers and a local farmer who has a solar installation. It was a very successful first Indiana Solar tour.

Mindsight Helped Promote Fall Event

MINDSIGHT helped Evergreen Conservancy promote our Solar Energy Fall Event by airing free advertisements about our program on their electronic billboards on October 8 & 9, 2019.



Board Members

Cindy Rogers - President • Malcolm Hermann - Vice president • Becky Snyder -Treasurer
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OUR MISSION:

To advance the preservation, protection and stewardship of Natural, Cultural and Historical Resources in and around Indiana County, PA

Grant News

Evergreen Conservancy was awarded a \$15,000 grant from the Colcom Foundation for water monitoring and environmental education. We will have to replace some of our water monitoring devices this year and this grant will help to do that. Thanks to Colcom Foundation for their support of our environmental issues.

This is the time of year to work on additional grant writing and making plans for 2020 projects.

EcoTour Updates

Get your passports at any one of the following locations:

Indiana Tourist Bureau, Indiana Free Library, Blue Spruce Park office, Yellow Creek State Park office, Blairsville Community Development Office, Solar Array cache site in Smicksburg, or the Indiana Conservation District office on 4th street. Go on a fun adventure! Go to <https://evergreenconservancy.org/indiana-county-eco-tour/indiana-county-geotrail/coordinates-and-links> for all 20 of our eco geocache trail sites. Trade that completed passport in for your very own Trackable geo coin in the shape of Indiana County!

Litter Pick Up

At the New Location, Blue Spruce Road

Evergreen Conservancy conducted its first litter clean up at Blue Spruce Park on Saturday, October 19. It began as a very frosty morning but turned to be a sunny pleasant day. Not much litter was picked up right along the road, but more was "over the guard rail". Eight bags were picked up. Interesting items included two yellow buckets (contents ?) and a fender.

Thanks to those who participated: Bridget Gardner, JoAnne Ferrero, John Ferraro, Jeff Himes, Shannon Kundla, Bob Lankard, Janis long, Cindy Rogers, and Becky Snyder.



Environmental Education News

- Hunter safety course was held at Pine Ridge park on October 6th. It was a long training day but all present learned a lot and all passed the test. A big thanks to all the folks who volunteered their time to do the training course.
- We had several tours of IUP students at Tanoma this fall. All had a tour of the system and learned about AMD and passive treatment systems.
- Blacklick Schools brought 45 7th graders out to Tanoma on October 23rd. We had three stations set up: Macro invertebrates, system tour with water testing and renewable energy. Thanks to the volunteers who helped carry out the programs: Josh Brown, Jeff Himes, Cindy Rogers, Paul Majoris, Stephanie Widzowski, and Sarah Smallwood.
- Erin Janeski brought two different classes to Tanoma on October 23rd and 24th for a system tour.



An Eagle Scout's Plastics Recycling Endeavor Donate Your Single-Use Plastics

My name is Silas Schiera, and I am a Life Scout with Troop 1011 in Indiana, PA. I am currently working on my Eagle Scout award, the highest attainable rank in the Scouts BSA organization. One of the requirements for earning this award is to "plan, develop, and give leadership to others in a service project helpful to any religious institution, any school, or your community." For my Eagle project, I decided that I wanted to benefit both the Indiana High School community and the Indiana community at large. I worked with Trex, a composite decking company to do so. Trex sponsors a plastic collection challenge in which a group or organization can collect five hundred pounds of plastic film in order to receive a bench from Trex in appreciation for the recycling efforts put forth to collect the plastic.

The challenge itself is simple. Collect five hundred pounds of plastic film within a six-month time frame in order to receive a composite plastic bench. The bench costs nothing more than the effort associated with coordinating people in donating plastic film that would otherwise end up in a landfill. Essentially, the bench is free (shipping and handling, too!). In order to obtain five hundred pounds of plastic, I had to get the word out to the Indiana community. Once that was done, I set up four different collection points across the town of Indiana. Thankfully, Trex provided two collection bins to place at pre-selected locations, but I needed two more bins to fully cover my four collection points. The last two boxes were handmade by my sisters, and two of my younger sister's friends. They spent an afternoon painting the cardboard boxes with the recycling symbol. Once the paint had dried on these DIY collection bins, I distributed them to my last two points, and finally, collection could begin.

I officially began collecting plastic bags on July 15th,

and in that same month I collected fifty pounds of plastic. On Friday of every week, I got a friend or family member to drive to each collection point and help me collect the plastic that people had submitted there. Once I had gathered all the plastic from each collection point, I took it home, placed it in large clear bags, and weighed it, recording the weights. After this, I took the collected plastic to the Giant Eagle supermarket on Ben Franklin Road where I could submit my plastic to Trex. At the end of each month, Trex had me report my accumulated weights of plastic, and by the end of July, I was proud to have collected almost one hundred fifty pounds of plastic.

After July, the months of collection went by quickly. In August, I collected one-hundred-fifty-three pounds of plastic, in September I collected one-hundred-twenty-four pounds of plastic, and in October I collected one-hundred-ninety-four pounds of plastic. In four months, I had collected six hundred thirteen pounds of plastic, well over the five hundred pounds needed to receive a bench. In November, I contacted Trex to tell them I had collected five hundred pounds of plastic; I should receive my bench in a few weeks. I plan on installing this bench at the Indiana Area Senior High School near the band's practice field so that parents and community members have a place to sit when they come to listen to us play.

Although I'm finished with collecting the plastic for my Eagle project, other organizations have heard about the project and have been inspired to take on the same challenge that I began in July. Within the next couple of months, Horace Mann Elementary School's Parent Teacher Association will begin their own Trex Community Recycling Program so that they can install a new bench in their playground area. I am sure that they can use as much plastic film as possible!

Eleven different types of plastic bags that are viable for donation:

- grocery bags
- bread bags
- water case and soft drink case overwraps
- dry cleaning bags
- newspaper sleeves
- ice bags
- wood pellet bags
- Ziploc and other reclosable bags
- produce bags
- bubble wrap
- salt bags
- cereal bags

All bags must be dry and clean.

If you have your hands on extra plastic bags, please consider donating them to the Horace Mann PTA once their collection has begun.

Dates to Remember:

November 23 . . . 6:30 pm Come see the film "Bag It – Is Your Life Too Plastic?" at the Indiana Players Theater at 6:30 – FREE – First 50 people get a free metal straw! There will be a few speakers and a discussion after the film.

December 3 . . . 6:30 pm PR and Finance meetings 6:30 Oak Street Second floor Senior Center

December 6&7 Pottery sale by local artists at the Common Place Coffee House lobby

Tanoma Update

The Trompe: All towers and the sled are working to produce more dissolved oxygen in the first pond to help the iron drop out. It all seems to be working fine. Air intake units of the Trompe will need to be power washed every 2-3 years. Winter maintenance was done by Evergreen Conservancy volunteers and IUP Into the Streets volunteers. The last of our programs was finished up in October. Re-wiring for the new wind turbine is nearly complete.

Thanks to Stephen Plowcha and William Lesso and all our other volunteers for IUP's Honers College and the 'Into the Streets' program who provided so much of the labor.

Tanoma is open to hunting by permission only but the hunters will be informed that the path is open to the public from dawn to dusk.



The Tanoma Wetlands Education Center is improved and maintained entirely by the labor of our Board Members and volunteers.

Let's Talk Poinsettias

By Shannon Kundla

Poinsettias are most often thought of as a Christmas Flower. We see them in flower arrangements, wreaths, and décor. Their beautiful colors remind us of Christmas cookies, Hallmark movies and church nativities. But did you ever wonder where they came from and how they became synonymous with Christmas time?

Poinsettias are native to Central America, and are especially common to an area of southern Mexico known as Taxco del Alarcon, where they flower all winter. The ancient Aztecs called them Cuetlaxochitl. During the 14th and 15th centuries the sap was used to control fevers and the leaves were used to make a reddish-purple dye. The Cuetlaxochitl was said to be cultivated as a gift from the gods and Montezuma. Montezuma (the last of the Aztec Kings) loved the flowering plant so much that he adorned his palaces with them.

The Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is a scraggly shrub that lives seasonally in the dry tropics. Mature plants can grow so big that they are often used as hedge rows, and can become so lanky that they resemble vines. The shrubs flower throughout the winter. What we think of as large showy red flowers are actually leafy bracts. The plant actually produces small yellow flowers that you see in the center of the Poinsettia plants. In the wild, as the days grow shorter, the plants begin to mature their flowers. At the same time, the leafy bracts begin producing pigments. When the days become shorter than the nights, the plant goes into full reproductive mode and produces the showy red and white colored bracts. As soon as the days start getting longer than the nights, the plants switch out of their reproductive mode and the dazzling color fades. In captivity, this change is mimicked by putting the plants into complete darkness for a minimum of 12 hours a day.

During the 17th century, the Poinsettia became, for the first time, a part of Christian ceremony when it was used in the nativity procession, the Fiesta of Santa Pesebre. It is around this time that many legends originate, and explain why the Poinsettia became known as the Christmas Flower, or the flowers of the Holy Night (Christmas Eve).

One legend tells the story of Pepita, a poor young Mexican girl, heartbroken that she did not have any money to buy baby Jesus



a gift. Seeing her tears, an angel appeared and told her to pick a bunch of the wild Poinsettia flowers. When Pepita's tears hit the flowers, their petals turned into bright red blooms, and she presented the blooms to baby Jesus. Another legend tells of Franciscan friars decorating a nativity with the wild plants. During the mass, as the star of Bethlehem passed overhead, the leaves turned from green to bright red. The Poinsettia became a symbol of the blood of Christ and quickly associated itself with the Christmas season.

It wasn't until 1828, when Joel Robert Poinsett came across the flowers while in Mexico, that they came to the United States. Joel Poinsett was the first US Ambassador to Mexico, and during a visit, he introduced the American Elm into Mexico. While he was in Mexico, he found the beautiful shrub with large red flowers growing near the road. He took cuttings of the plant and brought them back to his plantations in South Carolina. Mr. Poinsett had several greenhouses on his plantation, and he began growing the plants and sending them to his friends. One of his friends saw the flowers at the first Philadelphia flower show and bought some cuttings. They were first sold as cut flowers. It was not until the early 1900's that they were sold as whole plants for landscaping and potted plants. It is thought that the flowers became known as Poinsettias in the mid 1830's when people found out who brought them to the US. The Ecke family from Southern California were one of the first to sell them as whole plants that could be grown indoors and in pots, and they are still the main producer of the plants in the USA. Within a 6-week period leading up to Christmas, there are over 70 million Poinsettias sold and nearly \$250 million Poinsettia sales accounted for.

In July 2002, the United States Congress created National Poinsettia Day on December 12th to honor the late Joel Roberts Poinsett, who played a very crucial role in bringing the Christmas flower to the US.

The Poinsettia plays many important roles in the holiday traditions and celebrations all over the world. The holiday season would not be the same without Mr. Poinsett's keen interest in the beautiful red and green plant!

Membership Benefits

We are pleased to announce the following partners who have supported Evergreen Conservancy by giving discounts to card-carrying members of Evergreen Conservancy. Visit them, get your discount, and thank them for supporting Evergreen Conservancy!

Spaghetti Benders	15% discount	spaghettibenders.com
Michael B's Shoe Store	\$10 off any purchase	www.michaelbshoes.com
Plant-it Earth	15% discount	on FaceBook The-Plant-It-Earth-Greenhouse-And-Gardens
Little Mahoning Creek Pottery	10% discount	www.nancysmeltzer.etsy.com
		littlemahoningcreekpottery.blogspot.com
Homemade Restaurant	10% off total bill	www.thehomemaderestaurantpa.com
Artist Hand Gallery	12 oz. drip coffee \$1	theartistshandgallery.com



JOIN OR RENEW your membership TODAY if you have not already done so for 2019.

Support Evergreen When Shopping

You can support Evergreen Conservancy this year by shopping! Shop local first, but if you do on line shopping do it at smile.amazon.com and Amazon will donate to Evergreen Conservancy. Shop for everyone on your gift list this holiday at smile.amazon.com/ch/01-0808065 and Amazon donates to Evergreen Conservancy.



Please support Nature's Way market in Greensburg. They support us with a generous donation!



Thanks again for the generous donation from Nature's Way of Greensburg who belongs to 1% of the Planet. Next time you are in Greensburg stop by and say thanks to them!

1% of the Planet is a global network of businesses, nonprofits and individuals working together for a healthy planet. Businesses that join 1% for the Planet commit to giving 1% of total sales each year to your choice of our approved nonprofit partners. You can get involved! Joining is easy – go to www.onepercentfortheplanet.org/tell-us-about-your-organization . 1% of the Planet brings dollars and doers together to accelerate smart environmental giving. The Planet needs you NOW.

Join Evergreen Conservancy Today!



Support the all-volunteer Evergreen Conservancy and its mission through your membership.

Name: _____ Phone: _____
 Address: _____ E-mail: _____
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Membership Levels:
 _____ \$15: Student _____ \$25 _____ \$45 _____ \$70 _____ \$100
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 Evergreen Conservancy, PO Box 0783, Indiana, PA 15701



I am interested in volunteering:
 ___ as a board member ___ on a committee (finance, PR fundraising) ___ with water monitoring field work
 ___ on Legal issues ___ with grant writing ___ environmental education ___ social media ___ Homer City gardens plots
 ___ with fundraising activities (making crafts or manning a table at sales) ___ other _____