HIGHLIGHTS

Want to know how much energy the devices in your office use?

Contact Joel about conducting a week-long office energy audit to find out how much you're using and how you can reduce it.

In December, the Prairie State College (PSC) Board of Trustees approved a contract to install a **solar photovoltaic (PV) array** on three of our buildings—the main building, the tech wing, and Adult Training and Outreach Center. The designed array will help the college save on its electricity bill and will serve as a commercial-scale teaching tool for potential renewable energy courses in the future.

Get rid of your Solo cups responsibly!

In a partnership with TerraCycle, PSC now has a way to recycle these hard-to-recycle cups that are not readily accepted by many curbside services. You can drop them off in Joel's office, room 3216. Acceptable are all #6 rigid plastic cups (no Styrofoam).

One of PSC's **electric vehicle chargers was upgraded** to the more reliable next generation model. This upgrade came with a new cloud service that enables user queueing. Notifications can be sent to drivers waiting for a port when the car ahead of them is finished charging.

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS of innovative collaboration

South Metropolitan
Higher Education Consortium

UPCOMING

FEBRUARY 8

On Feb. 8, the South Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium (SMHEC) will host a Link & Leverage Conference at PSC highlighting community-related sustainability success stories, including small business engagement, native landscaping, urban agriculture and tips for funding opportunities. More information and registration is available here.

Feb. 20-Mar. 10

The One Earth Film Festival will be in the Chicago area from Feb. 20 to March 10 at various venues. Thirty-one different films will be shown, all addressing different sustainability-related issues from birding and dirt to pollution and the future. Click here to see a list of films, show times, and locations.

APRIL 22

Earth Day is April 22. Stay tuned for sustainability-related events going on in April.

prairiestate.edu/sustainability

IN THE NEWS

- Chicago Blackhawk Patrick Kane (and the other NHL All-Stars) will sport a jersey made of plastic harvested from the ocean during the Jan. 26 game. Adidas's partnered with Parley for the Oceans to source the ocean plastic and "upcycle" it for use in the jerseys. Read more.

- The Ocean Cleanup, an organization with sights on cleaning floating plastic from the oceans, hit a speed-bump after deploying its autonomous system in the "Great Pacific Garbage Patch" in October 2018. They plan to pull the system to Hawaii for repairs before re-deploying it to continue their trial. Read more.

- Denmark is embarking on a project to build a series of nine new islands south of Copenhagen. These small islands will create new space for industry, leisure and power generation. They will also provide flood defense and habitat for underwater species and reefs. Read more.

What can I do to help?

- Turn the brightness down on your computer monitor. This results in up to a 58 percent reduction in its energy use, and may be easier on your eyes!

- Fully shut down your computer at night and on weekends. This results in more than 60 percent overnight power reduction compared to using sleep mode.

- Unplug unused electronics. Even when not in use, some electronics draw power in standby.

WORDS: Circular Economy

The **circular economy** refers to an economic system in which resources flow in cycles rather than in "lines" (**linear economy**). Most of the economic activity since the industrial revolution has depended on (1) the extraction of materials from the earth, (2) the use of non-renewable energies to form and deliver products, and (3) the use of landfills to dispose of products that have reached their end of life: a linear process sometimes referred to as "Take, Make, Waste."

Take	Make	Waste
limited resources	using non-renewable energy	without recovering value

The **circular economy** aims to "close the loop" on our economic activity. This means understanding the value of what we currently deem "waste," and returning those valuable materials to the economy by reusing, recycling or composting them. (I could attempt to reinvent the wheel, but the best graphic I know of to illustrate this concept was created by the Ellen Macarthur Foundation and can be found here.)

EXAMPLE: The Illinois-headquartered Caterpillar has implemented a model for refurbishing and remanufacturing its heavy machinery and in the process has reduced owning/operating costs for its customers, increased the reliability of its equipment and strengthened its relationship with customers by offering remanufacturing services to extend its products' lives and recover materials for continued use.

SPOTLIGHT

The PSC Information Technology Resources (ITR) Department is constantly updating its equipment to run more effectively and efficiently. Here are a few examples of ITR's recent steps towards more sustainable technology.

• **Thin-Client:** Thin-Clients centralize the computing power and data storage needed in offices and labs, leaving only the monitor, mouse, keyboard and essential ports in the workspace. This means greater computing efficiency and reduced energy demand per user.

• **E-waste disposal:** With the help of Facilities, ITR recently had ten pallets of old electronic waste removed from storage by a program called ATEN who wipes the equipment and allows people with disabilities to use what can be refurbished, while recycling what is no longer operable.

• **Gmail transition:** While the shift to Google's GSuite means learning a new system for many employees, this transition has allowed ITR to reduce its on-campus server size significantly, which means less equipment to power and cool.

Thin-Client

E-waste

Got Ideas?

If you have ideas for helping our campus run more efficiently, produce less waste, offer sustainability-related courses or programs, or generally be more sustainable, contact PSC's Sustainability Coordinator Joel Nightingale at extension 3727 or jnightingale@prairiestate.edu.

FORWARD THINKING: Why sharing makes so much sense

As sage parents and preschool teachers around the world wisely advise, "sharing is caring." But it sometimes seems that after leaving grade school and those constant reminders, many promptly leave this philosophy behind in favor of that of hoarders. We don't just want the ability to get around; we want *our own* cars. We don't just want the ability to clean our clothes; we want *our own* washing machines and dryers. We don't just want access to tools; we want *our own* woodworking shop. This, despite the fact that these things sit idle for most of their lives.

In certain cases, having our own things makes a lot of sense. As sustainable as it would be to share a toothbrush from a resource perspective, that would obviously cause some considerable social and health issues. But there are many reasons to consider shifting towards what is sometimes called the sharing economy in other areas of our lives. Everyone knows about Uber and Lyft (mobility), and many know of Airbnb and VRBO (vacation lodging). But here are a few examples that you may not have heard of:

- Chicago Tool Library: "The average drill is used for just 13 minutes in its lifetime." While the Chicagoland area tool library hasn't opened (yet), Toronto (and other cities like Denver, Seattle, Philadelphia, and Minneapolis) has a successful tool library stocked with almost 10,000 tools, more than 5,000 members and three different locations. Members pay annual fees, starting at about $40, which grant them access to tools for projects just like a regular library would lend books. Some even have makerspaces, so you don't have to make a mess in your house or apartment!

- Turo: "Cars are parked 95 percent of the time." This car rental service (along with others like GetAround) allows people in need of mobility to connect with unused cars offered up for rental by people near them. The fewer cars on the road – and greater utilization of the cars that are – is a win for everyone, including those that want the thrill – but not the baggage – of a mid-life crisis splurge.

- Rent the Runway: "The average woman throws away 82 pounds of clothing per year." Fast fashion (in both men's and women's clothing) takes a toll on our planet's resources and one way to look stylish while also living a more sustainable lifestyle is to rent the clothes that you only wear for special events. Other services like The Mr. & Ms. Collection rent every-day clothing to keep your closet from going stale while reducing textile waste.

These companies/organizations are helping us to achieve a higher utilization rate for these products, which gives us what we *really* want – mobility, access to tools, sense of style, etc. – without burdening us with the full up-front cost, maintenance, storage/parking, cleaning, or insuring of these *things*. This type of sharing also has the benefit of incentivizing manufacturers to make robust and easily repairable products. A drill that is expected to be used for only 13 minutes will be designed as essentially a disposable product, whereas a drill that is expected to be used by many people more-or-less continuously will be designed to last.