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## Zero-Waste Project at U.Va's John Paul Jones Arena is Successful

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The University of Virginia's pilot "Zero Waste Event," a March 1 performance at the John Paul Jones Arena by the Harlem Globetrotters, was a success, according to organizers, and could serve as a model for standard operations in the future.

"We are estimating approximately 70 percent diversion from the landfill from this event," said one of the event's organizers, Ashley Badesch, a third-year **politics** major in the **College of Arts & Sciences**. "While this leaves plenty of room for improvement, it's at least 30 percent higher than diversion rates without zero waste practices in place."

Badesch said the approximately 65 student volunteers who worked the event collected roughly 3.38 cubic yards of compost, 1.63 cubic yards of non-cardboard recycling and 12 cubic yards of cardboard.

The student volunteers manned 25 "waste stations" that featured recycling and composting bins. They assisted event-goers in disposing of their waste in the proper container, with little to no contamination of the compost stream. There were three receptacles on each floor for waste collection – one for compost, one for recycling and one for trash taken from the bathrooms. Additionally, concessions staff also separated their back-of-house waste into three containers. After the game, leftover food was collected to add to the compost.

Badesch and Matt Boegner, a third-year **systems engineering** major in the **School of Engineering and Applied Science**, began the Zero Waste Initiative in fall 2010 as a project for a **Global Sustainability** course. Initially, the pair based the project on a precedent set at the University of Colorado, Boulder, which went "zero waste" at its football stadium in 2008. In March 2011, they met with members of the **Athletics Department** and **Facilities Management** to create a framework for zero-waste athletics events. **Student Council** passed a resolution supporting a "Zero-Waste Football" initiative, and last fall the U.Va. **Parent's Committee** and **Green Initiatives Funding Tomorrow** funded a pilot program at JPJ.

"Without the help of JPJ Arena management, including Facilities Management and **Dining Services**, **University Recycling**, U.Va. **Office of Environmental Health and Safety**, and U.Va. **Sustainability Partners**, the event would not have been possible," Badesch said.

"The widespread confidence in our vision was extraordinary. Not only did the management of JPJ and several other community partners take the time and effort to meet with us on several occasions in preparation for the event, but additionally 65 enthusiastic student volunteers

spent part of their Friday night helping in the effort. I could not be more appreciative.”

Badesch said that vendors also cooperated with the effort and that few product conversions were necessary to sell only compostable and recyclable products.

“Sustainability is a major point of emphasis for most public assembly facilities, and John Paul Jones Arena is no exception,” Jason Pedone, the facility’s general manager, said. “In partnership with the U.Va. Zero Waste Initiative, the test pilot event was a success and we look forward to collaborating on methods of growing the program. With continued, dedicated and energetic involvement from student partners, the long-term possibilities are very exciting.”

Chris Stevens, sustainability manager for U.Va. Dining Services, said the event demonstrated that meaningful waste-reduction strategies can be successful on a larger scale and have a lasting impact.

“The students were really excited about the event and that excitement rubbed off on the patrons, so the patrons were happy to do their part,” said Jessica Wenger, environmental projects manager for the Office of Environmental Health and Safety. “The patrons enjoyed the opportunity to interact with the students and support a student initiative. All of the patrons that I spoke to were very supportive of the zero-waste effort. In addition to being good for the environment, it allowed students to educate the public in a friendly way that the public really seemed to respond to.”

Wenger took note of the project’s student-driven nature. “Matt and Ashley dreamed up the project almost three years ago and worked hard to coordinate with students, faculty and staff to make their idea a reality,” she said. “In addition to the zero-waste event being good for the environment, it was a good example of how students can take a classroom learning experience and apply it to the real world. Matt and Ashley’s class project turned into an actual initiative that can hopefully become the new standard for events at U.Va.”

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