



New “Zero Waste” Project Takes Garten Services Beyond Recycling

Timothy J. Rocak, CEO
Garten Services, Inc.

Recycling has become America’s favorite environmental activity, as more than 100 million of us recycle every single day nationwide. Garten Services is proud to have been a leader in Willamette Valley recycling efforts since passage of Oregon’s original “Bottle Bill” back in 1971.

Starting in May 2009 – thanks in part to a grant from the Department of Environmental Quality – Garten has had the opportunity to take recycling and our dedication to sustainability to a new level. We’ve launched an innovative new project called **Garten Zero Waste Events**.

Although it’s still very new, Garten Zero Waste Events is successfully helping people reduce and recycle event waste, while creating green collar jobs. More than merely providing members of the public with effective means of recycling/composting at gatherings and events, we are creating jobs for people with disabilities. What’s more, these jobs put people with disabilities in leadership roles to educate the general public about creating a smaller environmental footprint.

Even though the concept of “zero waste” has come a long way in a very short time, the broad goal of achieving zero waste through all business segments is admittedly challenging. It requires major changes in **product creation** (manufacturing and packaging), **product use** (use of sustainable, recycled and recyclable products), and **product disposal** (resource recovery or landfilling). To truly achieve zero waste at events community-wide, we realize the need to increase outreach and educational efforts targeted toward manufacturers, event organizers, purchasing agents and recycling coordinators.



Photo courtesy of Garten Services, Inc.

Oregon State Fair is just one of many events Garten has helped with their Zero Waste Project.

While it is our goal to become a community resource by helping rethink and redesign a variety of long-standing processes toward more sustainable alternatives, the bulk of our current project activities are directed toward improving waste disposal options. By mid-August 2009, Garten has completed ten successful zero waste events – including the Marion County Fair and the World Beat Festival. Collected data reveals that Garten Zero Waste Events successfully diverted a cumulative total of 4.4 tons (8,787 pounds) of solid waste from local landfills. This included 3,140 pounds of hand-sorted waste segregated for recycling or repurposing, 3,238 pounds of organic waste salvaged for compost, 1,717 pounds of food waste separated for livestock feed and 692 pounds of discarded liquids.

Garten Zero Waste Events biggest “zero waste” event in the region — was the 11-day 2009 Oregon State Fair. It is a mammoth task. If you’ve seen State Fair ad campaign materials, you know that “It’s BIG – Too Big to Miss!” We are anxious to see the waste diversion data detailing the impact of our total zero waste efforts conducted at the State Fair.

This is sustainability at its best – a program that helps solve an environmental problem for the community and provides jobs for people historically excluded from the mainstream.

Garten Services, Inc., a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization founded in 1970 that creates jobs each year for over 500 people with disabilities.

Call 503-581-4472 or visit www.garten.org. ♦



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