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River of Recyclables

By Mary Ellen Wade

Baltimore activist artist, Bridget Parlato created the “River of Recyclables” at Loyola Maryland last spring. It is a project designed to involve and inspire the community on the topic of sustainability to become stronger stewards of our environment. The owner of “Baltimore Trash Talk,” Bridget makes public works using found trash while raising awareness about recycling and the need for a bottle bill. After months of collaborative planning between the artist, associate professor of studio arts Janet Maher, and Taylor Casalena, an employee with sustainability initiatives, Loyola students, faculty, staff, and administrators collected over 3,500 plastic bottles and cans with which Bridget could create the “River.”



Students from studio arts and Sustainability, Messina students, and members of the student Environmental Action Club (EAC) assisted. Throughout the day, Bridget engaged in discussions with participating classes and others visiting the “River,” explaining her motivations behind

the project and encouraging further efforts toward sustainable practices at Loyola. Taylor and EAC students assisted with conversations about Loyola’s current initiatives and recycling resources. Janet led students and staff in an additional art project using caps from the collected bottles for the “River.” These pieces will be displayed on Loyola’s campus with information about the “River” and its purpose –



Left: Section of artist Bridget Parlato's "River of Recyclables" created in collaboration with the Loyola University Maryland community on the Quad. Far left: Studio Arts Two-Dimensional Design class responsible for kicking off the day—unloading and opening the collected bags, saving bottle caps, counting the collection and installing the "river." Above: Overview of the installation hub on March 15, Loyola University Maryland Quad.

Right Throughout the day a bottle cap project kept students engaged at the river as the day progressed.

Photos by Fr. Timothy Brown, Dan Schalpbach, and Janet Maher.

helping extend the message and intention of this event beyond just the day on the quad. The day concluded with a gathering and reflection about the event before total de-installation and final recycling. A further meeting with Bridget, Janet, and Taylor and interested faculty and staff will generate requests to Loyola's administration for additional efforts toward sustainable practices at Loyola.

Mary Ellen Wade is associate director of the Messina Living-Learning Community Program at Loyola University of Maryland.

(These links provide further information: Student Sarah Wolford's (Class of 2019) video about the River: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3G8YgERTDt0> ; Drone footage of the "River" by Rafael Castillo (Class of 2016) in Dr. Russell Cook's Communication course: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgmX8iKwhvc> ; Loyola's sustainability website that provides updates on sustainability projects at Loyola: <http://www.loyola.edu/departmentsustainability>)

