Welcome Note (By Farouk Merhebi – EHSRM Director)

Dear Readers,

In the recent waste crisis, EHSRM participated actively in the task force led by AUB faculty members to find optimal solutions to managing our waste and those of the neighborhood. EHSRM Director was involved in the outreach and public awareness committee and the AUB community committee. This resulted in spreading the culture of recycling across campus by expanding the number of recycling bins to the lower campus and residential buildings and raising awareness on reducing, reusing and recycling and on the health effects of mismanagement of solid waste. Moreover, battery collection points were added in 12 buildings on campus (click here) to collect dead batteries for their safe disposal rather than disposing of them with municipal waste.

In our efforts to ensure the safety of labs, EHSRM developed a checklist system to classify labs as red, orange and green. Red rating indicates that the lab has critical safety violations and should make the necessary safety corrections within a week otherwise the lab will be closed. Green rating indicates that the lab is safe. Efforts are being coordinated with the Deans of each Faculty to enforce the application of safety regulations in labs. In addition, EHSRM prepared and launched a bid for the export and disposal of chemical waste generated from labs during the last two and a half years in accordance with Basel Convention for the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste. EHSRM in coordination with FPDU installed fire alarm systems in Bliss Hall and Penrose Hall and installed evacuation plans and pre-designated safe assembly areas signs in all buildings on campus to facilitate the evacuation process during emergencies.

With the solid waste management crisis in Lebanon, light was shed on the integrity of proper waste management to protect public health and provide a cleaner environment. It is very crucial that several practices must come into action at the level of the country. Nevertheless, proper waste management must begin at home. Here are some tips that can be applied at home to reduce solid waste, recycle and reuse, and to a certain extent compost this waste.

Reduce: To start with, it is important to minimize waste generated at home to have less waste to manage later on. Waste generation can be reduced as follows:

- Try to buy products with least possible amount of packaging. Food products like rice, beans, and spices can be bought in bulk from food sections in stores. Store such food products in glass jars that can be used again. This minimizes the waste generated from food packaging.
- Consider using cloth bags instead of plastic bags. These bags that are recyclable and reusable are sold in many supermarkets in Lebanon.
- Try to cook at home instead of ordering food from outside. Food cooked at home is not only healthier, but relatively generates less solid waste. Delivered food have a lot of packaging that ends up in the garbage increasing waste generated at home.
- Try to minimize the consumption of plastic bottles. Whenever possible, try to reuse these bottles at home instead of buying new ones every time.
- Minimize paper usage by reading newspapers and paying bills online.
- Buy only what you need from the store and in the needed quantities.

Recycle and Reuse: Recycling and reusing are very important to conserve resources and save energy. Here are some tips:

- Donate the stuff you no longer need. You can donate cloths, toys, computer parts, furniture, books, etc...
- Purchase glass containers that can be used several times. If you already have plastic containers, they can be reused as well, but be careful to use them properly. Reuse boxes, bottles, and bags too.
- Consider buying products that are eco-friendly and contain recyclable or recycled materials.
- Segregate recyclables (paper, carton, glass, plastic, cans, etc.) from organic waste in different waste bags and send them to recycling industries. Around 35% of municipal waste can be recycled.

Composting: If your house happens to have a garden, you can consider composting your organic waste.

- It’s best to site the compost heap on a level, well-drained spot, to ensure that any excess water drains away easily. This also helps worms to get in and get on with the job of breaking down the content.
- Keep your compost aerated by turning the pile once a week and humid by spraying with water. It’s good to keep a mix of green (kitchen scraps, fresh leaves, coffee grounds) and brown material (dried leaves, shredded paper, untreated sawdust).
- When your compost is ready you’ll have a dark brown, almost black soil-like layer that you can use as soil conditioner.

Think Safe

1. How many times can glass be recycled?
   a) 10 times  b) Indefinitely
2. Biodegradable plastic bags should be:
   a) Used all the time because they break down in landfill
   b) Used only sometimes, as they still take up space in landfill
   c) Avoided where possible, because bags consume oxygen as they break down and this can lead to algal blooms

Answers are on page 2

Waste Management Facts

- Most plastic shopping bags are used only once and a plastic bag can take more than 200 years to decompose. Plastic bags that are thrown into the sea kill over a million sea creatures a year.
- Making glass from recycled materials cuts related air pollution by 20% and water pollution by 50%.
- The average Lebanese person generates around 1 kg of trash every day or about 365 kg per year.
- About one-third of an average dump is made up of packaging material.
Abd Al Munim Huneino
Mr. Huneino joined AUB in 1993 as an assistant chef at the AUB Cafeteria. In 1996, he moved to the Athletics Department, and he is now a Senior Sport Facility attendant in CHSC.
Abd is very active in recycling activities at AUB. He scored the best recycler since the start of the recycling program in January 2014; he has collected 65,718 bottles and cans so far. Abd went with recycling far from environmental interest to humanitarian ones, whereby he was amongst the first to suggest initiating the recycling for charity to support the Children Cancer Center of Lebanon.

Faysal Mehtar
Mr. Mehtar joined the Athletics Department at AUB in 2003. Then he was appointed as Sport Facility Assistant Attendant in the Charles Hostler Student Center. In 2012, he was promoted to Senior Sports Facility Attendant.
Faisal started collecting plastic and metal bottles with the installation of Reva recycling machine in CHSC in April 2014; he is by now one of the two best recyclers at AUB with a total of 17,794 collected bottles and cans.
Faisal recycles for good causes: not only a clean environment, but also as a donation for the Children Cancer Center of Lebanon.