

THE UPCYCLE

Messiah University's Office of Sustainability Official Newsletter

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One Year in the Office of Sustainability

By: Emily Phillips, Waste Coordinator

When I joined the Office of Sustainability as the Waste Coordinator in Training this past September, I had no idea what I was walking into. It has been such a good experience!

Hands-down, the best part of working in the office is the people. Sharing whoopie pies at team meetings, having random conversations with whoever happens to be in the office, working together to hold events, and being a part of this thoughtful, caring, and sometimes wild group of people has been a highlight of my year!

Working for positive change on campus has also been very fulfilling, and I am so blessed to be a part of that by organizing our free swap events and Sustainable Move-Out this semester. I love seeing the disbelief on students' faces when you tell them that everything at our swap events is free!

There have definitely been difficult parts of working in the office as well, such as realizing that a sustainability issue on campus is beyond my capacity to change. I have a greater awareness that our waste problems haven't been solved because they are complicated and difficult, and not because no one is trying to solve them.

I am excited to return to the Office of Sustainability next year, to welcome new office staff, and to see what progress we make in the new semester!



— CR2ZW — SPRING 2026

We sincerely thank everyone who attended Campus Race to Zero Waste and contributed to its success. Your support reflects the impact of our community and its commitment to sustainability.





Why You Should Consider Biking in 2026

By: Wesley Paris, Energy Coordinator

Bikes have come a long way since their popular debut in the 1860s- and with rising costs in transportation and an ever-increasing need for physical activity, bikes can save you and the environment in many different ways. Here are three reasons to give bikes a try this spring.

Reason #1 Bicycles don't require much. They don't need fuel, many repairs, or extensive knowledge to repair them. Bicycles have far fewer parts than an automobile and don't require insurance. They only need light maintenance throughout the year and take up very little space. If you travel or hope to live in an urban environment, a sturdy bike can be your best friend! This creates less waste, less fuel emissions, and less noise - all of which benefit your local community and environment. These examples make bicycles less expensive, environmentally friendly, and easily portable.

Reason #2 Bicycles can greatly improve your health.

As a physical activity, biking places less stress on your joints and tendons, but creates natural break times while riding, like coasting downhill or stopping for traffic. While it burns fewer calories than running, different gear ratios and incline can create a harder workout. If you are looking to exercise more, biking can provide a fun and easy way to get cardio, especially if you are injured (nothing beyond aches and sprains!) or aging. Cycling is great for mental health, with mood-lifting benefits from exercise, spending time outdoors, and opportunities for social rides. Simply put, cycling offers a traditional, simple, and inexpensive exercise activity, open to both beginners and experts, without membership costs or social comparison common at modern gyms.

Reason #3 Electric bikes. Modern advances in battery technology have created a growing market for electric bikes, which are an appealing alternative to cars. Many local staff at Messiah utilize these as a quick way to get around or for longer rides.

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E-bikes employ a pedal assist, which can require very little energy to bike, covering miles and hills. While they can run for a few thousand dollars, they are an attractive alternative to cars, with storage accessories making the transition easy.

All this in mind, there are a few obstacles, at least here in PA, to bicycling. Our roads around campus are not ideal for biking, with high speeds, hilly terrain, and thin shoulders. Make sure to wear proper gear, bright and/or reflective clothing, mirrors, and employ front and rear lights when needed. PA drivers are required to give at least 4 feet (half a lane) of distance when passing, which may require a driver to wait for the road to clear. Urban environments provide more advantages, with more cities creating bike lanes in the US. Another issue is the weather, since you will have to brave the elements. Wear-proof gear is a must-have for rain, and high speeds will make the nearby air feel colder. In any case, specialized clothing is widely available for all-weather cycling, and using taxi/Uber service, even a few times a month, will still save more money than owning a car.



Overall, if you are environmentally conscious, love exercise, or are looking for a new hobby, be sure to give cycling a try. Many local stores, cycling clubs, and repair shops are happy to help you get started! If you want to 'earn a bike', head to Recycle Bicycle, their closest location in being in Harrisburg.

They accept and repair thousands of bikes for free a year, host hundreds of volunteers, and allow customers to work with mechanics to fix and own an old bike for free. Messiah even has a bike shop, run by yours truly. For the frugal mind, there is no reason you can't bike for cheap. Ask around, look around your garage, and give biking another try this spring.

Being a Math Major in Sustainability

By: Nehemiah Aviles, Garden Team

The Office of Sustainability recently provided an opportunity to attend the 2026 PASA conference. Pasa is a nonprofit that supports sustainable farms and equitable food systems through farmer-driven education, research, and community. Attending this conference was such a blessing in so many ways, creating a deeper understanding of the farming community, farm practices, business practices, and the general mindset they have towards their farms and community.

Learning about the farming community was especially meaningful. The people there had an evident passion for farming, with every conversation consisting of why they farm, how they farm, and what they enjoy about farming. Whether they were beginners asking questions or the experts answering them on the stage, it didn't change the levels of interest and intrigue. This opened up the world of farming not as something exclusive for the big farms and big profit, but also for the average plant enjoyer. Though it seems simple, I realized crops have been around long enough for there to be strategies for any experience level. The farmers' care for each other and other farms was also blatant in the sessions and the very nature of the conference. People needed information and to learn to better their yields, and everyone was readily willing to share.



As a stem major, learning about the farm practices was extremely fascinating. Baked within each farm practice was a deep efficiency and maximum yield mindset that is easily akin to mathematics and engineering. Alongside this mindset, there were engineering innovations littered in every stage of the farming process, from growing, to watering, to pest management, etc. Within even these mindsets was the need for biologists and chemists to create the tools that would allow for efficient tools to become possible. Simply put, stem is engrained in modern farming.

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Apart from the stem world, the conference touched on the importance of who your farmers market audience is, particularly if you sell on the local level. This became evident when an audience member asked one of the speakers when to sell their eggplants, since they had been struggling to sell their fall crop of eggplants. The speaker informed them, based on their experience, that Asian communities in particular purchased more eggplants than most other communities. Despite seeming like a self-evident factor, it reveals the importance of cultural culinary practices of the food market around you. In some ways, it gives people insight into cultures that may not be their own.

For some context, this conference definitely highlighted the intellectual side of farming and was, of course, consisting of a generally passionate audience by default. Though this isn't every farmer out there, it does at the very least reveal the ideal of the farming community. Additionally, if someone were going to reach out about help with a garden or farm, these are the kind of people you would want to be reaching out to.



Before going to this conference, I didn't have a great understanding of just how far sustainable practices could go. Now I see genuine potential. For students, gardening can be a great way to get outside and have a time to do something immediately meaningful with tangible results. Gardening is also a skill that can be used in the future as a hobby or for minor profit. Additionally, and it's what stood out the most for me, the complexity that's involved in gardens and microbiomes reveals a deep beauty in God's creation that fosters a feeling of awe towards God that is hard to find anywhere else. There is beauty in nature that only intimate time outdoors can reveal.

Follow us on social media for more updates on sustainability, The Up Cycle, and our upcoming Sustain-A-Fest event next semester!

 @messiah.sustainability