

Incline crab feed nearly hits goal of zero waste

By Madonna Dunbar

Can you imagine throwing a big party, providing a bar, feeding 400 people a three-course dinner “ and ending the night with only fourbags of trash from the whole event?

Though it sounds impossible, this is exactly what happened at the Incline High School Booster’s 26th Annual Crab and Pasta Feed on Feb. 6.

It is a Zero Waste Event success story.

So how was this done?

First, the planning committee for the Crab Feed decided that “going green” was an important consideration that needed to be expanded from the previous year’s initial green initiatives.

The committee members then worked closely with Incline Village General Improvement District’s (IVGID) Waste Not Programs to plan the evening’s “Zero Waste” efforts. Since this event historically relied heavily on the use of disposable serviceware, a commitment was made to purchase compostable serviceware “ which could be collected with the food waste (including all the crab shells) for compost processing. This meant that the cups, plates, utensils, napkins and even the crab bibs that were purchased – were made from plant-based sources. Compostable serviceware is made from renewable sources such as potato, corn and bamboo; all are non-petroleum and non-styrofoam items.

These compostable items are readily available online and can now be found at local grocery stores.

Figuring out the recycling system was a little easier. The Lake Tahoe region now entirely uses a single stream, blue bag collection method, so all the cardboard, paperboard, glass, aluminum, hard plastics and non-compostable cups from the evening festivities could be collected for recycling.

The night of the event – the Waste Not staff, plus two enthusiastic AmeriCorps volunteers, set up waste sorting stations. These stations had one collection can each for: compostables, recyclables and trash. The student servers and event volunteers were shown how to sort the materials. It got pretty hectic as the night progressed and the dinner courses were served and cleared, but everyone participated and learned it was an easy system to follow.

Through the careful planning of the dinner service itself, and the use of this three-part collection system (compostable/recyclables/trash) – this large scale event; which would have easily filled an 8 yard dumpster full of trash – became a low impact event.

The event's 36 bags of compostables were stored in four 96 gallon BearSaver carts and delivered to Full Circle Compost's industrial composting facility in the Carson Valley to become rich, vibrant soil.

The 16 bags of collected recyclables were diverted for re-processing instead of being dumped in a landfill. So the same amount of materials that would have been waste, instead became a source of renewed resources.

So what was in the trash anyway? There were some non-compostable cups used by mistake for the appetizers, plastic wrap, plastic food bags, the foil wrappers off the butter pats and the hand wipe packets, latex gloves, wine bottle collars, plastic wine corks, and the gunk from the dishwashing food trap.

The night's results:

- 36 bags of compostable material averaging 40 lbs/bag = 1440 lbs. of compostables
- 16 bags of mixed recyclables: (5 bags w/glass averaging 40 lbs/bag + 11 bags at 20 lbs./bag) = 420 lbs. of recyclables
- 4 bags of trash averaging 25 lbs./bag = 100 lbs. of trash
- 1,860 pounds of diverted material; only 100 pounds of trash sent to the landfill
- Greater than 95 percent reclamation/diversion
- That's less than 5 ounces of trash per attendee, not fully zero waste, but darn close.

For more information about the Lake Tahoe Zero Waste Project, please contact IVGID Waste Not at (775) 832.1284 or email wastenot@ivgid.org.

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