

CHAPTER 17

THE MASTER RECYCLER COMMITMENT

INTRODUCTION

Did you know that volunteering can make you happier faster and easier than material wealth? According to a Harvard Health publication, the more people volunteer the happier they are.

Compared with people who never volunteered, the odds of being *very happy* are 7 percent higher among those who volunteer monthly and 12 percent higher for people who volunteer every two to four weeks. Among weekly volunteers, 16 percent felt very happy — a hike in happiness comparable to having an income of \$75,000 to \$100,000 versus \$20,000, say the researchers.

Of course you already knew the value of volunteerism. You have joined a volunteer corps of Master Recyclers who have already volunteered more than 72,000 hours.

Congratulations! You're about to complete the Master Recycler course. Once you do, you will receive a badge that lets everyone know that you are officially a Master Recycler. But this formal training is just the beginning of your experience as a Master Recycler. The Master Recycler Program is much more than just a training course. We are a community education and action volunteer corps. It is our goal as Master Recyclers to inspire our co-workers, friends, family and neighbors to bridge the gap between what they know and what they do.



Volunteer corps

“If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope.”

Barack Obama



*For more information on the relationship between volunteering and happiness you can consult Harvard Health's **Simple Changes, Big Rewards** (available online).*

You and your fellow classmates are going to take the information and techniques you have learned and apply them from Canby to Forest Grove, North Portland to Welches. You will be sharing what was most meaningful for you and translating it into the language, culture and actions that make sense in the diverse communities you represent.

Your next step, completing 30 hours of payback activities, will take you from the classroom and into the community as an ambassador of sustainability. Some of you may be feeling a little nervous, while some of you are raring to go. This last section of the Master Recycler Handbook is designed to serve you no matter where you fall on that spectrum.

ONGOING SUPPORT

When you volunteered to become a Master Recycler, you made an active commitment to decrease waste in the region. But you are not making this commitment alone. You're joining 1,800 other Master Recyclers including a corps of Master Recycler Mentors, who are available to support and encourage you.

You have support staff to help, as well. They will continue to help by providing and/or maintaining the following resources:

- **The Master Recycler Handbook.** This handbook was designed to be a resource when you are volunteering. New editions will be available on the Master Recycler website.
- **The Master Recycler website** includes a volunteer opportunity calendar, a news blog and postings of related jobs.
- **A Master Recycler Mentor** will send an email greeting shortly after the course. This person will answer questions, connect you with the Master Recycler community, and help you troubleshoot. Many of these Mentors have hundreds of hours of experience and all of them have demonstrated their desire to help the next generation of Master Recyclers.
- **Quarterly open houses and tours** to keep you abreast of the latest trends and help you continue to build your outreach skills.
- **A monthly newsletter** with pertinent articles and volunteer opportunities.
- **An easy way to report** your hours and a database that tracks your progress.
- **Brochures, flyers and demonstration kits**
- **Program and local government staff** who you met through the course are excited to provide assistance to Master Recyclers.
- **The Metro Recycling Information Center** at 503-234-3000 and online is a great resource for recycling, waste prevention, and toxics information.
- **Master Recycler facebook page and Official Portland Area Master Recyclers group:** Keep up on the relevant events and articles. See when your fellow Master Recyclers achieve milestones and network on the facebook group.
- **Master Recycler YouTube Channel**
- **Master Recyclers of Color (MROc)** monthly meetings, facebook group, google group is for anyone who identifies as BIPOC.

MASTER RECYCLER CERTIFICATION

As mentioned, upon completion of the Master Recycler course, you will be an official Master Recycler and will receive a badge. The next step is to complete 30 hours of community outreach (payback) to receive the Master Recycler Certificate. This Certification is helpful to include in your résumé. The Program Coordinator will issue an official Certificate, but if you would like a letter of recommendation or verification letter for applications, please contact the coordinator at masterrecycler@portlandoregon.gov



But you don't have to stop there! People from the very first class continue to volunteer. There is a recognition program for those who volunteer more. The Centurion Club is made up of Master Recyclers who have reported more than 100 hours. Quincenturions have reported 500 hours or more and Millennials have reported 1000 hours or more. The first two groups receive an additional button to wear next to the badge. Millennials will receive a license frame that says "Volunteer Master Recycler."

VOLUNTEER PAYBACK ACTIVITIES GUIDELINES

Program Mission Statement

The mission of the Master Recycler Program is to bridge the gap between awareness and action by providing the information and personal contact needed to activate people to reduce solid waste in their homes and workplaces.

Volunteer Payback Guidelines

To help us fulfill our mission, payback activities must meet the following criteria:



- Implement a system or program that diverts materials from the waste stream.
- Provide direct community contact to educate and inspire people to practice resource conservation



- Provide a meaningful educational and/or skill enhancing experience for the volunteer.

Hours for the Metro Master Recycler program count only when they take place in Clackamas, Multnomah or Washington County.

GETTING STARTED

We have a great success rate of Master Recyclers completing their 30-hour commitment. About two-thirds of people who have taken the course have completed their 30 hours. Most of the remaining third have reported some hours and are still working toward their certification.

It is recommended to start your volunteer time by signing up for volunteer opportunities that you will find in the Master Recycler newsletter and calendar. This will help you become familiar with existing programs. You will find that some of the opportunities will have you working alongside local jurisdiction or non-profit staff or mentors. They will usually bring the needed equipment with them and you just need to show up and be ready to talk about the topic. These are the best types of opportunities for anyone who is feeling a bit nervous or who would like to be more familiar with topics before going it alone. Other opportunities found in the calendar may require that you check out needed materials and set everything up. You can do these on your own or invite a fellow classmate to join you. There are over 40 community partners that will be delighted to put you to work in their projects. In fact they are counting on you!

More than half of Master Recycler hours are individual projects. This is where much of the magic of the program lies. Research shows that people are most likely to make a change in their lives when inspired by someone they know. So focusing projects where you work, live, play and worship will maximize your potential in making real change. These next few chapters will help you create and design your own projects.

REPORTING YOUR HOURS

Your direct contact with others in the community is a powerful tool for change. To keep the Master Recycler program vital, it is important to track its effectiveness. Reporting your hours not only helps us track your individual hours, it also allows us to tally the combined efforts of Master Recyclers in order to demonstrate our collective impact on waste reduction in the region. Please remember to report your hours regularly.

To report your volunteer hours, you can:

- Use the electronic report form on the Master Recycler website. Enter User name: MasterRecycler and Password: recycler.
- Contact the Master Recycler Program Coordinator at 503-545-8976 or by email: masterrecycler@portlandoregon.gov

When you report, please provide the following information:

- Your name and phone number/email.
- Date of event.
- Name/description of event.
- Number of outreach hours (rounded to the nearest quarter hour).
- Number of preparation hours (include studying, set up, break down and travel).
- Number of people that you directly contacted. Count how many people attended your event or presentation. For tabling, keep a tally of conversations as you go. Kits often include a count clicker. Or you can use a smart phone tally counter. You can even tally on a piece of paper.
- Number of people you think attended the event (or if this is a work project how many people work there, or school project how many attend, or multifamily community how many live there).
- The topic of the activity (e.g., residential recycling, plastics, e-waste, compost).
- The type of activity (e.g., table, presentation, event participation).
- The display/demonstration kit(s) you used.
- Any comments you have about the event.

Logging long-term projects

The forms discussed above are easiest for one-time projects. If you are working on a longer-term project that takes several months, or even years, to complete you have a couple of options for reporting your hours. You can report them as you go along or you can keep a tally sheet or excel spreadsheet and report every few months. Waiting until the end of your project to track the data is not recommended. You will not remember how many people attended meetings or how long you spent on a task.

Here is an example: You are coordinating an earth day celebration at your work. All of the work you do on this project counts towards your hours from talking with leadership to pitch the idea, forming a committee, regular meetings, setting up the space, ensuring recycling at the event, contacting potential speakers and information booths, promoting the event, organizing volunteers, and writing up an evaluation.

Some Master Recyclers will go to the website and fill out the form every time they write an email or have a meeting. Most prefer to periodically send in an excel spread sheet that includes the data listed above.



CONCLUSION

The Master Recycler sponsors (Metro, City of Portland, Clackamas and Washington Counties, DEQ and Recycling Advocates) and over 40 partners thank you for your commitment! We look forward to seeing you out in the community and hearing back about how things are going.

These next chapters will provide resources, tips and information on:

- Presentations and tabling
- Event recovery planning
- Resources
- Places to volunteer



INDIVIDUAL PROJECT PLANNING FORM

NAME			
ADDRESS	CITY	STATE	ZIPCODE
EMAIL	PHONE (DAY)	PHONE (EVENING)	

Goal Statement (what you plan to accomplish):

Project Summary:

Specific groups of people you want to work with (example: people who live in your apartments, property managers, principals and students):	Means of contacting them:
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Resources needed (time, additional volunteers, materials):	How will you determine (count) the number of personal contacts?
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How will you know if your project is a success? What criteria will you use to measure your project's effectiveness?

Any other information you would like to share about your project?