



## FEATURED STORIES

EcoPledge Hosts Green Week

Volunteers Clean Up Charles River on Earth Day

Bike BC Promotes Green Transportation with Bike-Share Program

Over 100 Plates Collected at Annual Plate Collection

Opinion: How Clothing Stores Like Forever 21 Are Harming the Environment

## OUR TEAM

This newsletter is a monthly publication by EcoPledge of Boston College.

Questions about our content? Contact us at [ecoplege@gmail.com](mailto:ecoplege@gmail.com).

Chris Russo, CSOM '19

*Editor*

Alex Capozziello, MCAS '21

*Associate Editor*

Alinda Dersjant, MCAS '21

*Graphics Editor*

### Contributors:

Maryana Dumalska, MCAS '20

Frankie Wilton, MCAS '21

Elizabeth Allen, MCAS '21

Eagle graphic courtesy of Zoe Fanning, MCAS '20

## CONNECT



[/BCEcoPledge](#)



[@bcecopledge](#)



## Green Week Celebrates Food, Sustainability, and the Outdoors

By Alex Capozziello

For the fourth year in a row, EcoPledge sponsored Green Week, a week-long celebration of environmental sustainability leading up to Earth Day weekend.

On Tuesday, April 17th, Green Week kicked off with a "Trash Dinner" hosted by BC Dining in collaboration with EcoPledge.

Attendees watched a screening of the film *Wasted! The Story of Food Waste*. The film documents the 1.3 billion tons of food thrown away globally each year, explores the reasons behind this massive waste, and suggests ways in which individuals can combat the issue.

During the screening, students were treated to the "trash dinner," which consisted of left-over pre-consumer food scraps including feta brined chicken wings with tzatziki sauce, pickled vegetables, and chickpea meringues.

On Wednesday, EcoPledge presented its first ever cultural cookbook showcase in the 2150 Lounge. Over the course of the se-

mester, EcoPledge partnered with several cultural clubs across campus to compile a cookbook of authentic and sustainable recipes.

During this event, EcoPledge members shared these recipes and provided people with some samples. Every option was vegan. Pesto

pasta, Lebanese tabbouleh, açai bowls, colcannon potatoes and cabbage, and vegan blueberry blintzes were some of the food items that were available from the

*continued on page 2*



Feta brined chicken wings with tzatziki sauce were prepared for the Trash Dinner.

*Photo Courtesy of BC Dining*



## Trash Dinner, Cultural Cookbook Showcase Featured During This Year's Green Week

from page 1

cookbook.

Most of the students attending the event were not vegan, but they were surprised at how fun and delicious the sustainable dishes were to create and eat, Kate Weingartner, co-president of EcoPledge and CSOM '18, said.

On Thursday, EcoPledge students stood outside O'Neill Library to further promote student sustainability, offering students the chance to paint their "green thumbs" onto a canvas and then sign their names below.

Finally on Friday, EcoPledge, in partnership with UGBC, hosted the Earth Day Fair on Stokes Lawn. A variety of student sustainability groups and outside vendors were there to promote their causes and share sustainable tips with students. CAB allowed students to make their own DIY terrariums, and Real Food gave out packets of flower seeds for students to pot in their dorm rooms. Local vegan restaurant by



Students made their own eco-pledges and signed them with a green thumb print.

CHLOE passed out vegan cookies, and the Office of Sustainability gave out baby spruce trees for students to plant in an effort to promote afforestation.

"Many people mentioned that they knew it was Earth Day weekend, but they hadn't ex-

pected BC to do such a big event," said Maria Meyer, vice president of EcoPledge and CSON '19.

The Earth Day Fair was a pleasant surprise for many students and helped increase awareness of sustainable efforts on campus, Meyer said.

On Earth Day, several EcoPledge members traveled to local Star Market grocery stores and passed out reusable bags to customers. The event was held in partnership with Green Newton in the hopes that local Newton residents would use the reusable bags rather than disposable plastic or paper bags going forward.

Meyer hopes that the events over the course of the week may have inspired some to think more "green" in their everyday lives.

## During Yearly Effort, Thousands of Volunteers Participate in Charles River Clean Up

By Alinda Dersjant

On April 28th, EcoPledge participated in an annual cleanup of the Charles River. Around 3,000 volunteers gathered to remove trash around the River in the annual Earth Day Charles River Cleanup.

The initiative is part of the National River Cleanup, an initiative of American Rivers, which has been around for 13 years. In the last two years, this event has drawn the most volunteers from the organization compared to its other river cleanup programs.

Among the trash collected along the river banks was a stunning amount of Styrofoam, glass, and cigarette butts. The grass and ponds near the river also contained plastic water bottles, shopping bags, metal cans and food wrappers. Volunteers also picked up Dunkin' Donuts, Starbucks, and McDonald's cups, along with straws, red solo cups and small

Smirnoff bottles.

The team was shocked by the amount of trash that accumulated along the Charles River because these items can negatively affect the environment—one plastic bottle was even completely grown over by a tree.

The cleanup mobilized hundreds of local community members. These volunteers shared the same level of enthusiasm during the event, happy to support their community and its natural green spaces.

Overall, the Earth Day event illustrated the power of collective initiative—participants were motivated by each other's efforts and thanked each other for their time together at the Charles.

The initiative increased awareness among volunteers about their waste habits and about the importance of cleaning up pollution. After the cleanup, canoeists were finally able to see more ducks on the river banks



Four members of EcoPledge picked up trash during the Charles River Cleanup.

than plastic bottles.

However, more than one cleanup a year is needed to prevent the severe impacts trash accumulation in natural habitats. In addition to damaging the recreation of the Charles River, the trash can also harm animals who may end up consuming the trash.

To address the problem at its core, efforts from companies, in-

stitutions, and individuals can be combined.

Companies can prevent litter by using less packaging materials and choosing to utilize biodegradable items. The city of Boston can install more recycle and non-recycle bins. Individuals can also be more mindful about their disposal habits in order to prevent waste accumulation.



## With Bike-Share Program, Bike BC Promotes Both Exercise and Environmentalism

By Maryana Dumalska

Bike BC, which started with just five bikes, has seen significant growth in the past five years. Keeping up with the increasing demand, the program now includes 20 bikes, with 10 more to be added in the next year.

After attending a training session, students are able to rent bikes free of charge at one of two rental locations—O'Neill Library or the Boston College Law Library on Newton Campus.

"It's essentially the same process as checking out a book," said Pranav Parikh, Bike BC's outreach coordinator. "You just go up and say, 'I'd like to check out a bike instead,' and as long as you've gone through the training process, your name will be in the system."

After presenting their BC ID, registered students are provided with a bike, helmet, light, and lock, ensuring safety. So far, 300 students have been trained, and over the past year, approximately half have rented a bike at least once.

In addition to renting out bikes and training students, Bike BC has arranged a number of group rides. Its main ride was organized through the Boston Bike Party, a local organization that brings between 500 and 1,000 people on a ride through the streets of Boston. The event brings together a huge community of bicyclists in the greater Boston area and highlights how bike-friendly the city and its residents are.

"We were able to bring about



Photo Courtesy of Bike BC

Bike BC had a table at the Earth Day Fair to promote its bike-share program. It debuted its "bike blender" to make smoothies.

10-15 people to that event, which was a lot of fun," Parikh said. "It was very cold that day, and I'm sure more students would have liked to come, but because of the weather, it was harder for them to."

Bad weather conditions also interrupted plans to join the Midnight Marathon Bike Ride, an event held annually on the night before the Boston Marathon when streets are closed. Boston weather has thus presented obstacles and made scheduling events difficult. Despite this, Bike BC plans to try to organize more group rides into Boston in the future, as many members have expressed interest.

Promoting biking as a safe

and eco-friendly means of transportation is the club's underlying goal. Biking is an effective way to reduce one's carbon footprint, and that's something that everyone should be conscious about, Parikh said. To spread this message, Bike BC has collaborated with environmental clubs such as EcoPledge and hopes to collaborate with the Office of Sustainability in the future.

The club has also partnered with BC Dining, promoting local, more environmentally sustainable food sources. At the Earth Day Fair, Bike BC premiered its Blender Bike, which uses its back wheel to rotate a blender.

"We were able to make fresh smoothies using just the bike

blender, and from what we gathered, it seemed to be a pretty nice hit," Parikh said.

Moving forward, Bike BC hopes to continue its growth. Parikh said he hopes that the training process could be included in freshman year orientation or during Welcome Week so more students would be aware of the program at the start of their BC career and would be able to access it more easily.

With a greater membership, as well as new partnerships, Bike BC hopes to continue promoting environmental consciousness and emphasizing the role of biking in sustainability.

"Biking and sustainability go hand in hand," Parikh said.

## Over 100 Dining Hall Plates Collected at EcoPledge's Second Annual Plate Collection

By Frankie Wilton

Members of EcoPledge paraded through Walsh Hall, Vanderslice Hall, 90 St. Thomas Moore Drive, and the Mods on April 15th—for a second consecutive year—to collect plates, bowls, and silverware that had been taken from Lower over the course of the year.

In the past, BC Dining has had an issue with students who bring their meals back to their dorms and don't return their plates. Last year, BC Dining reported that there were over 2,000

plates missing from Lower alone.

This year's plate collection was a success with 130 plates, 44 bowls, and 6 pieces of silverware collected and returned to BC Dining.

"It saves dining a lot of money, but more importantly, it helps reduce the amount of waste that we have," said Stevie Walker, EcoPledge's volunteer committee chair and MCAS '21. "If people are taking the plates for themselves, then BC has to order more plastic forks and silverware that can't be recycled. Having reusable plates saves lots of water, too."



130 plates and 44 bowls were returned to BC Dining from EcoPledge's collection.



# Check Your Fashion: How Some Retailers Are Harming the Earth & What You Can Do

An Opinion Piece  
By Liz Allen

Last month, here in *The Environmental Eagle*, Alinda Dersjant, MCAS '21, described the haunting social impacts of the textile industry. She painted the picture of “overcrowded sweatshops in Bangladesh,” where just five years ago, in April, a building collapsed in a garment factory in Rana Plaza, and more than 1,100 underpaid, underappreciated, and overworked garment workers lost their lives.

Many of us remember reading the headlines to stories like those in *The New York Times*, saying “Building Collapse in Bangladesh Leaves Scores Dead,” “Tears and Rage as Hope Fades in Bangladesh,” and “Another Preventable Tragedy in Bangladesh.”

From these stories, we could finally see the hidden costs to our excessive consumerism. It seemed that as a world, we were banning together to fight in the name of the lives that had been lost, and we did gain some headway.

In the months and years following the Rana Plaza collapse, legislation like the the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh was passed, and it was signed by companies like H&M, American Eagle, and Zara. Initiatives like the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, the Ethical Trading Initiative, and the Better Cotton Initiative were started in response to the Rana Plaza tragedy. It seemed like we were turning over a new leaf. But now, the conversation that was started five years ago seems to have screeched to a halt.

On Wednesday, April 25th an article in *The New York Times* was titled “Why Won’t We Learn from the Survivors of the Rana Plaza Disaster?” It seems that we have not learned.

In the article, Dana Thomas describes the sweatshops still present in Bangladesh and the fear that things will go back to the way they were before, as the Accord on Fire and Building Safety and the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety are on route to expire.

And it is not only garment workers who are affected by the textile industry. The industry is a leading polluter, making water sources unsafe and contributing

immensely to global carbon emissions.

According to Kelly Drennan, author of “Picking up the threads: fast fashion led to the Rana Plaza tragedy in Bangladesh. We can do better,” the average cotton t-shirt today takes 2700 liters of water to produce, which could supply the average person with enough water for 900 days. The textile industry is responsible for 20% of all water pollution, and on average, clothes travel 35000 km, which is just short of one trip around the Earth. Traveling is costly, both environmentally and economically. According to the EPA, traveling accounts for 27% of all carbon emissions, and long distance travel is a huge global emitter. For every ton of clothes produced, an estimated 200 tons of water is polluted.

There is no denying that the textile industry has an enormous influence on social, economic, and environmental systems. From the perspective of a student at Boston College, it may seem like there is nothing that we can do to help, or that these issues are too big for us to tackle. But the reality is that someone has to start making the change. If every single person changed his or her habits just a little bit, it would create a large impact worldwide.

To a lot of students here, it seems like buying lots of cheap

clothes that don’t come from the most reputable company is the only way to go. It is simple, inexpensive, and convenient. But in reality, buying fewer clothes from more ethical sources is probably better for your wallet, your style, and for the world.

As evidenced in Anuj Desai, Nedal Nassar, and Marian Chertow's report “American seams: an exploration of hybrid fast fashion and domestic manufacturing models in relocalized apparel production,” less than 3% of all clothes consumed in the U.S. were made domestically. We don’t usually see with our own eyes the social or environmental costs of our consumption. But we are the ones with the power to make a difference, and here is how.

Reuse. That is one thing that we hear all of the time, but not often with respect to clothes. Resale shops, both online and in store, provide an amazing opportunity for us consumers to get the clothes we want at amazing prices, take clothes out of the landfill, and contribute less to pollution and abuse. Apps like Poshmark, Vinted, and ThreadUp make it easy and convenient for us to browse second-hand clothes and accessories at affordable prices.

If buying new is absolutely necessary, we can be smarter about where we buy. Everlane, Alterna-

tive Apparel, and PACT are all sustainable and ethical brands that college students can afford. You can also learn more about a lot of clothing brands through the Fashion Transparency Index, which is a way to rate companies based on their supply chains, which was founded in the wake of the Rana Plaza disaster.

Wherever possible, avoid stores like Forever 21, Aeropostale, and Under Armour, who scored in the bottom 25% on the Fashion Transparency Index, and try to substitute those with stores like H&M, Levi’s, and Adidas, who scored closer to the top. Buying more ethically and sustainably doesn’t have to mean changing your entire wardrobe and spending a fortune on clothes. It simply means spending a little bit more time thinking about what goes into your clothes, and whether or not you want to continue to support the companies that you are supporting.

We are young, educated, and caring students. We should be held accountable for what we purchase, because what we purchase is supporting a cause, whether it is good or bad. These are choices that we are making every day that are having an impact around the world. I think it is time to ask ourselves, are we making the right decisions?

