

Planning Your Own



With a small team of coordinators, it is indeed realistic to plan a Zero Waste Day event within a 6 month period of time. Use our sample calendar below for guidance as you introduce *Drive Thru Donating* to your community.

6 Months Before ZWD

- *Select a location and date.* When selecting a location, ensure that it can accommodate a line of waiting cars without interrupting traffic. Ideal locations may include school or business parking lots that are not active on your event day. Also consider the size and number of trucks that the non-profit organizations will be using to accept donations. Most will bring box trucks and some may even bring tractor trailers. The parking lot that you select must be large enough to accommodate these vehicles *plus* provide a 2-3 lane passing zone between them. Be sure to request use of bathroom facilities at your site.
- *Complete necessary venue/insurance paperwork.* If using a public parking lot, submit an official property use request (forms provided by town/city) and confirm that your event will be covered by a Certificate of Insurance should an injury or accident occur. If using private property, consult with the business owner to confirm that you have adequate coverage through their policy.
- *Invite local non-profit organizations to participate in ZWD.* Ideally, you will have at least two organizations that accept furniture, three to four organizations that accept clothing and household goods, two to three that accept baby gear/equipment, one that accepts building materials, one that accepts books, and one that accepts pet and animal supplies. Do not proceed until you have confirmed that you have sufficient representation for the major categories of donations that you expect to receive.
- *Determine how ZWD profits will be used.* If you are offering electronics recycling for a fee, you will net a small profit from your event. Those funds can be shared with the sponsoring organization, reinvested in future ZWDs, or donated to a community cause or one of the participating non-profits. If you opt to donate the funding, you may wish to include that piece of information on your flyers, posters, and in press releases.

5 Months Before ZWD

- *Send commitment letters.* So that the non-profit organizations clearly understand your expectations, ask them to sign and return a commitment letter or partnership agreement. Based on our experience with no-shows, late arrivals, early departures, and insufficiently-sized donation vehicles, we introduced a Partnership Agreement and have found it to be a valuable tool in ensuring that our event runs smoothly.

- *Create a Facebook page and website.* If you don't have the resources to purchase a domain name, then you will likely be able to create a dedicated web page or pages on the host site of your sponsoring organization (recycling committee, church, school, civic/fraternal organization). Additionally, be sure to create both a Facebook page (for example, *Zero Waste Day, Tewksbury*) and a Facebook event (for example, *6th Annual Zero Waste Day*). Links to the website can be posted both on Facebook and on all of the online calendars of your local newspapers, as you will be able to direct readers to the site for more information.
- *Order signage and tchotchkes.* If you have the funds to order banners, lawn signs, reusable shopping bags, magnets, or other signage or tchotchkes, you'll want to begin researching pricing now. To stay green, we recommend not referencing a specific date, but instead noting the website, so that the items can be reused year after year. We strongly suggest that you invest in a very large sign or banner to be posted at your site for the week leading up to your event.
- *Create ZWD flyer.* Approach local businesses and ask if they might consider photocopying flyers for the event, or ask for a printing discount through your local office supply store. With approval from the Superintendent of Schools, flyers can be sent home in backpacks, or they can be shared at public meeting spots including: library, town hall, senior center, post office, sporting venues, etc... If sending through backpacks, we recommend distribution two weeks before the event.

4 Months Before ZWD

- *Add ZWD event to online calendars.* Don't underestimate the power of social networking and online news in spreading the word about your ZWD. By simply announcing the date, time, and venue, awareness will be created and shared. If you haven't already done so, create an event on your ZWD Facebook page and urge your friends to RSVP. Online calendars through your weekly and daily local news organizations typically require nothing more than an event name, date, description and (optional) image.
- *Request time to present to your Rotary Club or local business consortium.* Business owners like to give back, and they especially like positive publicity. Share any opportunities to provide donations of goods or funding, and invite them to volunteer at the event and hang a poster in their building.
- *Identify ZWD Ambassadors.* Find representatives from your community's key organizations and ask if they will be a ZWD Ambassador. Responsibilities include hanging posters at their site, distributing flyers to members, posting articles in newsletters/bulletins, and presenting event details to their membership.

3 Months Before ZWD

- *Create ZWD poster.* If funding allows or if you can secure the donation of printing, design a color 11x17 poster that includes date/time/location, all of the items that you are collecting and lists your web address.
- *Create a Used But Usable handout.* The purpose of ZWD is not just to provide one day of giving and recycling, but it is to introduce the community to the non-profits serving your area. So that they can remain connected to the participating groups and others, create your own Used But Usable double-sided reference tool. Side one lists all of the categories of items that one might expect to donate *and* the organizations that accept them, and side two provides the

full contact information for each organization. Be sure to include the ZWD website on the handout so that donors can visit your site for announcements about the next ZWD.

2 Months Before ZWD

- *Begin to recruit volunteers.* Volunteering at ZWD is a multi-hour commitment, so it's best to get on people's calendars sooner rather than later. We have found www.signupgenius.com to be a terrific online tool. Possible sources for volunteers include: local businesses, teens with community service requirements, church groups, civic organizations, mother's groups, fraternal organizations, and sports leagues. Because of the hazards of a busy parking lot, we recommend that children volunteering at your ZWD event be no younger than age 13 or in middle school.
- *Request publication in church newsletters.* Most churches send monthly newsletters and many are more than happy to include a small blurb or advertisement about Zero Waste Day, as it benefits both the community and the thousands of less fortunate people served by the participating non-profit organizations. You can often find the email address of the church office by visiting the websites of all of the churches in your city or town.
- *Request ZWD listing on local cable station.* A simple posting of location, date, and time, along with your web address, will primarily provide information to the population of people who do not access the internet and may not otherwise see posters or receive flyers.
- *Create a parking lot diagram.* Now that you know the dimensions of your parking lot and the participating non-profits, it is time to create a diagram to share with the volunteers and the charity reps, so that the layout is on paper and not only in the heads of the coordinators.

1 Month Before ZWD

- *Plaster ZWD posters all over town.* Since this event may require donors to set aside some time for cleaning out closets and rummaging through attics, it's best to hang the posters early. Ideally, 75-100 copies should cover all of your community's public buildings, grocery stores, restaurants, gyms, liquor stores, real estate agencies, convenience stores, and more.
- *Request use of tables and chairs.* Many of the non-profits find it helpful to have a 6 or 8 foot table to place donations while they assess them. In addition to one for each charity, you'll need tables for the Snack Bar and for the entry checkpoint. The site where you are hosting your ZWD event may be very willing to allow you to borrow their tables (and perhaps some chairs too) for the day. Otherwise, you might ask the school district, a church, or a fraternal organization.
- *Request sign support.* There's no doubt that many of the businesses, churches, and schools in your community have signs that they can customize for advertising. And, most towns have remote digital signs that they use for construction purposes. Why not ask them to help publicize ZWD during the week or days leading up to the event? If they say yes, be sure to send them a reminder one week before ZWD.
- *Create a large sign representing each charity.* Although many trucks will have the name of the non-profit organization noted on its side panel, some charities do not own their own trucks and secure loaner trucks instead. A great reuse trick is to borrow used campaign signs (wood post with campaign sign on top) and staple two large poster boards together to create a slip cover for the original sign. Then, find someone with great block letter handwriting and ask them to

create a sign for each non-profit or, if you have a strong connection with a local print shop, ask them to create printed signs for you.

- *Create traffic direction signs.* Using the same method as the signs for charities, create directional signs (with arrows) to help guide donors through the traffic patterns.
- *Write a press release for local newspapers.* You may wish to request that your weekly paper promote ZWD two weeks before the event so that potential donors have time to organize their donations.
- *Identify a volunteer photographer.* Find someone with a high end camera and an interest in capturing special moments and ask if s/he would be your event photographer. This can be a really fun assignment for a motivated volunteer, and great photos will allow for the creation of an event slideshow which can be used in future promotional efforts. Be sure to provide the photographer with a list of images that you would like to capture on film.

2 Weeks Before ZWD

- *Distribute ZWD flyer through school system.* With the permission of your Superintendent of Schools, you may be able to distribute the ZWD flyer through the elementary and middle schools in your community.
- *Send reminder email to friends and family.* If you send it two weeks before the event, you allow a weekend for those who thought they'd have time to go through their closets and ran out of time. Your reminder email should encourage the recipient to forward to their friends so that the initial message becomes a chain email. Check out our sample to make sure you've included all of the important details.
- *Post event announcement on local Freecycle Group.* Freecycle is a nationwide organization with local groups representing each community or region. It is a place where people offer items for free or request items for free. Join your local group through www.freecycle.org and then request permission to post an event announcement via email. This population is very attuned to recycling and reusing and would welcome notification of a Zero Waste Day event.
- *Request traffic cones from DPW.* Chances are excellent that your Department of Public Works department will allow you to borrow traffic cones for ZWD. If not, check with your town's athletic department. Depending upon the configuration of your parking lot, you may find it helpful to have anywhere from 10-30 traffic cones. Specify how many you will need and indicate that you will pick them up on the day before the event, unless they kindly volunteer to deliver them for you.
- *Print copies of event day handouts.* In addition to the donor/car questionnaire (which will help you to track participation), you can also copy the Used But Usable handout to distribute to each donor as a reference tool for future donating. Print 300 Used But Usable handouts and have up to 500 car questionnaires on hand with a back-up plan to print more during the event, if need be. You'll want to know how many donors you served and will not be able to track numbers without the questionnaires.
- *Hand number your donor questionnaires.* After printing and cutting the four-to-a-page mini-questionnaires (use our template), number each in the upper right hand corner and paper clip them in stacks of twenty. On ZWD, assuming that your Welcome Wagon crew either secures a completed questionnaire from each car or marks it as a *pass*, you'll be able to quickly determine how many cars have participated at any point in time. This is particularly motivating as you are able to announce your numbers to donors, volunteers, and charity reps. "Now serving number 300!"
- *Request press coverage.* Contact your online news source, your daily newspapers, your weekly newspapers, local cable access, and local news stations to ask if they will cover ZWD

on event day. Although this coverage will not increase participation in that given year, it will raise awareness for future events and it will provide great exposure for the non-profit organizations.

- *Confirm food and beverage donations.* If you haven't already secured donations of coffee, water, breakfast items, and pizza, now is the time to do it. Many of the volunteers and charity reps will be on site over the course of two meals and will not be able to leave their stations, so it is important to keep them well fed and hydrated. If you have a website, be sure to acknowledge the donations and provide a link to the donor's business or website.

1 Week Before ZWD

- *Send reminder email to participating non-profits.* It doesn't hurt to send one final reminder emphasizing the importance of arriving on time for set-up and staying until the official end of the event. You might include the parking lot diagram as an attachment. This is also your opportunity to confirm that non-profit representatives will be treated well with beverages, food, and volunteers (if requested). And, remind them to bring donation forms so that donors can claim tax deductions on their tax return.
- *Send reminder email to volunteers.* At this stage, you should have assignments for all of your volunteers and will be able to confirm a job and arrival/departure time for each. Use our template to make sure you don't forget any important details. It's helpful if you send a cheat sheet so that they can begin to learn the needs of each participating charity. You might also include the parking lot diagram as an attachment.
- *Send reminder to sign supporters.* If you were fortunate to receive a *yes* response to your request for sign support, be sure to call or send a reminder message so that the organization doesn't forget to promote ZWD on their sign.
- *Post a status update on your Facebook event.* Remind your event's Friends that next week is Zero Waste Day.
- *Distribute lawn signs.* If your budget permitted you to purchase lawn signs (we suggest reusable ones simply stating Zero Waste Day, This Saturday, and your website), then you should get them in the ground exactly one week before your event. Fifty signs strategically positioned along your community's main roads will give a definite participation boost to your ZWD.
- *Install large sign at ZWD site.* At the end of the driveway or road to your site or in a prime viewing area, secure a large banner or sign. To make it reusable, we suggest that it simply states *Zero Waste Day, Here - This Saturday*, and notes the website.

Day Before ZWD

- *Post a status update on your Facebook event.* Remind your event's Friends that tomorrow is Zero Waste Day.
- *Pick up traffic cones.* Don't underestimate how much space nested traffic cones can fill in your trunk. Be sure to have a pick-up truck or SUV to transport the cones.
- *Stage the parking lot.* When your parking lot is completely empty, mark the spots where you wish each donation truck to park using the signage created in the prior month. Simply fill tall buckets with sand and stick the (reused campaign) signs in the center with the charity name slipcover over the top. This will not only aid in accurately parking the vehicles as they arrive

for set-up on event day, but it will also assist volunteers with donation distribution. Do the same with the traffic direction signs.

- *Begin staging donation vehicles.* Believe it or not, some of the non-profits may request to park their donation trucks the night before the event. If using a town owned parking lot, make sure that police department is aware of any vehicles arriving early.

Event Day!

- *Bring to the event:*

<input type="checkbox"/> Name tags	<input type="checkbox"/> Snacks	<input type="checkbox"/> 8 ft. tables/chairs
<input type="checkbox"/> Sharpie pens	<input type="checkbox"/> Beverages	<input type="checkbox"/> Napkins/plates/cups
<input type="checkbox"/> Clip boards	<input type="checkbox"/> Clorox wipes	<input type="checkbox"/> Donor questionnaires
<input type="checkbox"/> Pens	<input type="checkbox"/> Purell	<input type="checkbox"/> Used But Usable Handouts
<input type="checkbox"/> Sunscreen/hats	<input type="checkbox"/> Duct tape	<input type="checkbox"/> Walkie/talkies (helpful)
<input type="checkbox"/> Trash bags	<input type="checkbox"/> Scissors	<input type="checkbox"/> First Aid Kit
<input type="checkbox"/> Camera	<input type="checkbox"/> Traffic cones	<input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone
- *Post a status update on your Facebook event.* Remind your event's Friends that today is Zero Waste Day.
- *Arrive extra early to begin set-up.* If your event begins at 9am and if you've asked the non-profits to arrive by 8:15am, then you should be on site no later than 7:00am. Before the non-profits arrive, the directional signs need to be in place, the truck location signs need to be in place, tables need to be set-up, and the check-in station needs to be clearly marked.
- *Set-up Snack Bar.* The non-profit reps may not mind arriving early if they know they can expect coffee and donuts while they wait for the lines to open. We recommend a QuikShade tent over the Snack Bar area and a second Quik Shade for volunteers taking a well deserved break.
- *Orient your volunteers.* Request that your welcome wagon, traffic control, and car unloading volunteers arrive 30 minutes before your event starts so that you can walk them through their responsibilities. Team captains are key to decentralizing the role of the coordinators and ensuring that there is more than one "go to" person. Ensure that everyone is wearing a nametag.
- *Give a pep talk.* Just before you are ready to open the floodgates, give a pep talk to your volunteers. Prepare them for angry donors and explain the importance of remaining calm and requesting help, when necessary. Identify a few conflict resolution people who have superb communication skills and can be called upon in sticky situations.
- *Open the event on time or early.* What's better than exceeding expectations? There's no doubt that there will be a queue of 10-20 cars waiting for ZWD to begin. We suggest being ready so that you can start 5 minutes ahead of schedule. Happy customers are return customers.
- *Don't get stuck with donations.* Before a donor drives away, it is critical that all of their donations have been accepted by one of the non-profits. If an item can not be used, it must be returned to the donor. There is no dumpster on site (unless you are able to secure a Got Junk bin).
- *Take photos!* The day will pass too quickly, and you'll regret that you didn't take enough photos to help you promote your next event. If you were not able to identify a volunteer event photographer, be sure to capture the following: the before shot of the empty parking lot, the side panels of each marked truck, the line of cars before opening the gates, volunteers

unloading donations, donors sitting (and smiling) in their cars, the open backs of trucks as they fill up, unusual (but acceptable) donations, and more.

- *Bring beverages and food to charity reps.* Unlike the general volunteers, the reps need to remain at their trucks at all times. Assign someone the task of walking around with beverages and snacks every hour to maintain the energy (and contentment) of the charity representatives.
- *Do not turn away donors until event is over.* If a donor entered the line before your end time, then s/he is entitled to donate items. At the conclusion of a great event, you don't want your final customers to drive away angry. Accommodate everyone as best as you can.
- *Return tables, chairs, and other borrowed items.* The clean-up crew should manage this effort at the end of the event, and they should coordinate with the organizations that loaned the items.
- *Store signage until next event.* If you haven't done so already, identify a location where any reusable items (signs, tchotchkes, etc...) can be stored.

After ZWD

- *Send Thank You message to the participating non-profits, volunteers and business donors.* It always feels great to be acknowledged; especially after such an uplifting community event. Be sure to include your results and any stats that underscore your success.
- *Write a Thank You letter to the community.* A Letter to the Editor of your local daily or weekly newspaper is a great way to offer your thanks and share results. It also provides you with an opportunity to acknowledge local businesses that donated goods, services, or funding to Zero Waste Day.
- *Post photos and results on your ZWD site.* If your photographer did a great job, you can easily compile a slideshow to be posted on your website.
- *Distribute ZWD profit as you had originally planned.* As soon as you receive the proceeds from the electronics recycling, be sure to disburse them as a donation or deposit them into an account.
- *Conduct a debrief with volunteers.* There are opportunities for improvement and key learnings with each event, no matter how many times you've done it. Take some time to talk with volunteers and compile a list of lessons learned so that you will have augmented wisdom for the next event.
- *Enter email addresses into distribution list.* Using the car/donor questionnaires, create a distribution list with all of the email addresses provided. When you confirm the date of your next ZWD, send them a courtesy message to mark their calendars.
- *Rest.* Only 5 more months until planning the next ZWD begins!