



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

19 Gregory Drive, Suite 204
South Burlington, VT 05403

#4

EMAIL info@cswd.net

TEL (802) 872-8100

www.cswd.net

To: Board of Commissioners
From: Beth Parent, Community Engagement and Outreach Manager
Date: April 17, 2024
RE: Solar Eclipse Reuse Program Update

Over the past few months, CSWD has witnessed an inspiring story of community engagement and environmental stewardship! It has been so wonderful to see how a small idea blossomed into a widespread initiative through collaboration and creativity.

Our Community Outreach Coordinator first learned about the organization, “Astronomers Without Borders” (AWB), during a solar event planning meeting in February and thought it would be a great organization for CSWD to join forces with. The original goal was to see if we could collect a few thousand solar glasses from events at the Burlington Waterfront and send back to AWB to reuse during another solar or lunar event in the future. We quickly learned that original goal would easily be met within a few hours after the eclipse ended.

Through our community connections, we initially partnered with 10 different event sites to collect glasses. The quick thinking of the CSWD Drop-Off Center team to offer special bins at each of the six centers further facilitated the collection process. By providing multiple drop-off points, it was even easier for community members to contribute their used and unused glasses, thereby increasing participation and the overall impact of the program.

Shortly after we announced our partnership with AWB and the initial collection sites, dozens of schools, businesses and libraries reached out to us to join the program. The interest even spread outside the borders of Chittenden County: folks from other counties and states reached out to see how they could participate. Our Drop-Off Centers have been buzzing with community members bringing their used and unused glasses to us. Some have stopped by to drop off a few pairs, others bring in bags of glasses at a time. Next up for Team CSWD is to sort through and count the glasses. Then we will store them for a few months before sending back to AWB for reuse.

This creative partnership has not only generated a buzz in the community, it sparked a lot of media interest. We have done interviews with the Boston Globe, VPR, WCAX, WPTZ, Seven Days and the Burlington Free Press, to name a few. The Associated Press also picked up the Burlington Free Press story, which ended up running in the Arizona, Texas, California and Hawaii markets.

This partnership is a perfect case study on how to create successful program. This type of opportunity doesn't happen often, but when it presents itself, we have the right team of people to jump on it and make it successful. It's a testament to the power of partnerships and the dedication of both CSWD and the broader community.

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