

# Volunteer Recruitment Shows Success of Schenectady County Master Composter Master Recycler Programs

SCHENECTADY— After a five year hiatus, Master Composter and Master Recycler programs are again active in Schenectady County.

Twenty adults are enrolled in the Class of 2017 Master Composter Master Recycler (MCR) Volunteer Training and Certification Program offered at Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County (CCE,SC). Angelina Peone, with Schenectady County Recycles, is facilitating the MCR program.

The program runs Thursday evenings September through October at the Sustainable Living Center in Schenectady's Central Park. The Class of 2017 Master Composters/Recyclers will receive 24 hours of training from 12 guest speakers, and the training program also features 2 field trips to local recycling and composting facilities. Several NYSAR3 members are included in the list of guest speakers.

*"I made it a priority to attract a diverse pool of volunteers as part of my recruitment strategy," Angelina said. "The volunteers-in-training all come from a variety of professional, ethnic, and social backgrounds, which I think really works to inform their ability to teach and engage the unique population of Schenectady County residents."*

Approximately half of the program participants live in Schenectady County neighborhoods, and half live in communities outside of the County - 70% of the students are female, 20% are male. Half of the program participants are under the age of 30, the youngest being 20 years old, and half of them are over the age of 40.



**Debbie Jackson helps the Master Composters/Recyclers learn about improving and assessing waste reduction programs, demonstrating a waste audit from samples of classroom trash.**

*social media to reach a younger audience, utilizing local community group pages to promote my program. Connecting with local colleges, alumni associations, etc. also helped attract young adults who are interested in environmental science and building their community or professional experiences. I reached out to an editor for the local newspaper that writes about the environment, and benefited from an article they wrote about my program. I made it a point to be a guest on local public access television during recruitment as well! A variety of all three strategies: face-to-face interaction, print media, and social media networking, all contributed to my success in volunteer recruitment."*

Angelina started recruitment 6 weeks before the program began. The level of regional-interest in composting, recycling, and community engagement was apparent, and a few applications were turned down because class size was limited.

She plans to run the MCR program again next Fall, in an effort to recruit a diverse, regionally-sustainable network of outreach educators and community engagement volunteers who will work to promote recycling, composting, and other forms of waste reduction.

You can view Angelina's segment on the Schenectady Today Show by visiting <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTJI2qD5MkQ>. For more information about Schenectady County Recycles, or to connect with Ms. Peone, visit [www.CCEschenectady.org/recycling](http://www.CCEschenectady.org/recycling). Follow success stories on social media @SchenectadyCountyRecycles.

Angelina joined CCE,SC in March as a full time Recycling and Composting Educator, a position made possible by the Schenectady County legislature with grant support from the NYSDEC and the NYS Environmental Protection Fund.

(more photos, pg. 2)



**Dan Kurtz of County Waste & Recycling demonstrates the hazards that contamination in single stream recycling create for sanitation workers.**

*"My advice for other Recycling Coordinators who may be considering a volunteer recruitment effort---would be to branch out as much as possible while looking for volunteers. Don't assume the same approach to recruitment will attract a diverse group of individuals. Put yourself in places that people interested in environmental sustainability would likely go...like farmers markets for example. I'd say 25% of my volunteers learned of the program while I was doing outreach at the city's three weekly farmers markets. I turned to*





## Schenectady County Master Composter Master Recycler Programs



Members of the MCR class toured the County Waste & Recycling Material Recovery Facility in Albany.



In photo above, Dan Rain, Town of Bethlehem, left, and Gary Feinland, DEC, co-hosted the “Intro to Organics” session, where MCRs (below) learned about wasted food donation, reduction, and large scale composting.

