Sustainable Libraries Initiative Update

When we last provided an update on our progress in working toward certification by the [Sustainable Libraries Initiative](https://www.sustainablelibrariesinitiative.org/), at the beginning of the year, we had turned our attention to plastic. We had already been trying to cut down on our use of plastic, but it is impossible to escape from it entirely. Plastic is a wonderful material for many things, but the ubiquity of single use plastic is overwhelming our planet, and apparently many of us as well.

In January we began collecting plastic bags and film—ours and yours—as part of the [NexTrex Recycling Challenge](https://nextrex.com/view/educate#materials1). The community has responded enthusiastically, and we are receive plastic from several other business and organizations as well as from individuals. By collecting and recycling this materials the Library can earn a Trex bench. But the really important part of this is to keep that plastic out of landfills and our oceans. Ideally, this project will raise awareness of how much plastic we are using every day and encourage us to find ways to reduce that amount. To date, we have collected about 275 pounds, so we are about a quarter of the way toward that bench.

By the way, you can help in one other very important way to this project. Once we collect and weigh the plastic, we must deliver it to drop off locations at local grocery stores—Big Y, Hannaford’s, Price Chopper. We need help with that. We collect too many bags of plastic for staff alone to take it every week. It won’t fit in our cars! So if you can volunteer to help with, please email Kate at [communications@roejanlibrary.org](mailto:communications@roejanlibrary.org).

Our other main focus in recent months has been on programs. The theme of Earth Day (April 22) this year is Planet vs. Plastics. So we’ve REALLY been immersed in plastic. Join us on Earth Day for a screening of the 2023 documentary *Plastic Earth*, which looks at how plastic pollution is affecting the earth, and how we can solve the problem together. Later this month kids will have the opportunity to learn about plastic pollution and recycle some plastic bottles into fun lightning bugs. Other earth-friendly programs this month include a program on the importance of dark skies and a presentation on composting. And we have refreshed our seed library, part of our Library of Local collection, and patrons are welcome, no, encouraged, to check out seeds and to grow some produce and flowers of their own.

Looking further down the road, we are beginning planning for our second [Repair Café](https://www.repaircafehv.org/columbiase), this September 28. We are looking for help in many forms—help the plan, set up, and clean up after the event as well as “fixers” who can help repair or mend items. We know we need more lamp repairers, knife sharpeners, scissor and tool sharpeners, and jewelry repairers, as well as general handypersons who can fix a variety of kinds of items. We had a great time at this community event last year and we are hoping that this year’s will be even better. To help out, contact Fran at [outreach@roejanlibrary.org](mailto:outreach@roejanlibrary.org).

While sometimes if feels like our progress toward certification is slow, the process has clearly changed our thinking, and sustainability is no longer an afterthought but top of mind in all that we do.