

Sustainability Sundays Fact Sheet

#15: Dream in a closed loop

Things that require a truly different approach to life often make it easy for each of us to create reasons why we can't do them yet, or what makes us exempt from the demands these changes would thrust upon us. I had started composting a few months ago and then self admittedly used the excuse: "I just don't have the time" But that's bullshit, I mean how long does it really take to separate food waste and take it out back, to do the 5 extra minutes of work in any number of areas in our lives that if we all just sucked it up and did would make all the difference? To begin to see each of our lives as cyclical with so many breaks and junctions that spew productive energy out into space that no real rotation or revolution is possible. I propose that working towards closing those gaps and repairing those ruptures would logically lead to a better life, both ecologically and internally. So what does it mean to create a closed loop- The first thing to do is look at the systems you operate in, and assess the waste generated by products or services you use and re-apply them or find new ways to use them as raw material for new services or products thus minimizing or actually cutting out waste altogether. One of the greatest examples of this is a company literally called closed loop based in Melbourne that create specific types of containers and collection bins for all types of businesses and products, once used are reprocessed thus cutting out a huge amount of waste with commingled recycle bins. Or closer to home, unfortunately not in the Midwest is a company called Casella who create the same types of systems for U.S. cities both commercial and residential of which KC is luckily getting closer all the time.

If you think this doesn't apply to us let me bring up a fun fact: As of right now based on current Kansas City waste practices our landfill is expected to be past capacity by 2020, that means our waste will have to be exported. There are a lot of things going on here often times right under our noses that move towards practical solutions and you can easily become a part of them. In early 2002 Bridging the gap started its byproduct synergy campaign which involves finding multiple diverse companies and using them to begin exchanging waste thus one company's waste is another's raw material just like the companies above. They also promote information on recycling, local food systems, and many other things. Any one interested in locally driven change that has practical solutions should go volunteer there the benefits greatly outweigh any work you may have to do. There are also businesses that have started taking on the reins to make an impact like One More Cup a local coffee shop who have managed to cut down 95% of their waste, think about what that could mean if it became the business model for the service industry in Kansas City? They use Missouri Organic who makes it possible for both

small and large businesses to cut out food waste, their flagship if you will is the Hall Mark Complex ironically one the largest food purchaser's in the area and now officially a 0 landfill business. The greatest find in my research however is a non profit org called Growing Power. The premise started in Milwaukee to create urban organic food systems that use little to no power or non organic material to grow clean food and used a closed loop with all waste produced in urban settings. They have recently opened multiple projects the newest of which are in Chicago, these are indoor facilities using grown fertilizer, natural habitats and living systems-kept warm year round by composting materials that extends the growing season and have absolutely no negative impact on the environment surrounding them, in fact the latest was built on an abandoned basketball court and now offers workshops and youth programs for their community.

But let's talk about what WE can do HERE and NOW, it's great to look at examples of other models and other people doing things, but their not us. So this week before we get to hear from an actual local business owner who DOES do these things let's think about our own closed loop. Laura Poe's mother has land in Liberty; she has just given us permission to take over about an acre dedicated to local closed loop food systems. Dave Lawrence from the KC Food Circle has offered to find the equipment we need to get the land ready, and we have a growing community right in this very room bursting full of potential. There are a lot of names on the wall behind me that want to learn how to grow organic food or already know how, well what better time to get your hands dirty. This will take loads of hard work, but what we offer is a way to KNOW where at least some of your food comes from, to grow and harvest it yourself and to close the loop on much of your waste. I'm talking about all of us composting and having a central deposit site, making our own fertilizer, planting and harvesting shifts on a rotation, excess produce delivery to your homes, the whole nine yards. We will be doing more work on this as the months progress and I hope to work with many of you to create something practically meaningful and beneficial to all those involved to show through chance and word of mouth that some random people can get together and through nothing more than right action and willpower better the world around them. Thank you, for your continued support, time and attention- Dane.

Informative Links:

www.bridgingthegap.org

www.growingpower.org

www.closedloop.com

www.casella.com

www.kcfoodcircle.org

www.missouriorganic.com

www.greenability.com

www.sustainable.org