

## **Oakton Community College**

Oakton Community College recently received an enhanced building energy dashboard through funding from the Illinois Green Economy Network (IGEN). In addition to the Lee Center energy and PV production from last year's project, we are now tracking the energy consumption at our Skokie Campus, as well. We are hoping that this additional information will allow us to make energy adjustments that will result in measurable savings. View the building energy dashboard online: <http://buildingdashboard.com/clients/oakton/>.

Also, we have been actively assessing our current waste trends on campus and have been meeting for the past several months to identify ways of reducing landfilled waste and more successfully diverting recyclable materials. A few of the initiatives we are exploring include: document imaging, pay-to-print software, and food waste processing/composting. We look forward to implementing some of these projects during the school year.

Oakton Community College is helping to protect Monarch butterflies by creating usable habitat on campus and in the community. Walk around Lake Oakton to see these habitats in action. Milkweed plants provide space for eggs and nourishment for caterpillars while other flowering plants provide valuable nectar for butterflies of this and other species. Our naturalist, Ken Schaefer, grounds staff, and Ecology Club help to ensure that these spaces exist and are restored all around campus. We could stop there...but we don't.

Members of Ecology Club and Oakton staff have spent hours collecting seeds from these plants, helping the seeds to germinate, then replanting here on campus and selling seedlings to students, employees and members of our community. In doing so, we not only encourage native plants to thrive in our local ecosystems, but we also are able to create usable habitat and food sources for monarchs and other pollinator species. Locally sourced seeds ensure that the plants are appropriate for our landscape and climate in this region. During Earth Week this year, Ecology club sold over 350 milkweed plants. The hope is that each of those plants goes into creating new backyard habitat around homes throughout the community.

In May, we took this experience even further by engaging with students at Euclid School in Mount Prospect (River Trails School District 26). As an Illinois Green Ribbon School, Euclid is already a leader in our community. Students in Barbara Michalesko's 5th grade reading group had been studying non-fiction articles about the benefits of planting milkweed and increasing monarch populations this past spring. To further connect them to the topic, the students grew 10 milkweed plants from seeds with the intent of planting them on site. Oakton donated about 30 plants to students who were joined by Oakton's Sustainability Specialist, Deb Kutska, on May 21 to plant the milkweeds in Euclid School's courtyard and community garden. Students got their hands dirty and learned more about local wildlife in the process. It was a great way to connect communities, inspire students, and create habitat for monarch butterflies. Together, we can help to support habitats, monarchs, and their tremendous migrations for generations to come.