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KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL AFFILIATE



# Merit Program Handbook

## 2020 – 2021



# Purpose

## Our Goal

To inspire generations of environmental stewards

## Affiliation

**Keep Williamson Beautiful** is the volunteer division of the Williamson County Solid Waste Department and is an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful.

**Williamson Recycles** is the education division of the Solid Waste Department.

## Process

Williamson Recycles and Keep Williamson Beautiful offer financial incentives to schools in an effort to promote environmental stewardship. By encouraging participation in environmental programs, schools are inspiring generations of environmental stewards.

## Structure

Each school identifies a volunteer representative to act as the school **Environmental Coordinator**. The coordinator is encouraged to plan school environmental activities.

The coordinator is responsible for reporting statistics for those activities to the county recycling specialist. The statistics will be reported to Keep America Beautiful in the annual report, which is required as an affiliate.

## Contact Information:

Williamson County Recycling Specialist / Keep Williamson Beautiful Executive Director – Jennifer Gosciniak Stanley

(615) 786-0166

[jennifer.stanley@williamsoncounty-tn.gov](mailto:jennifer.stanley@williamsoncounty-tn.gov)

**Please feel free to contact me with any questions year-round!**

# Merit Program Categories

## To Receive Funds, A School Must:

- Participate in the mixed office paper recycling program.
- Participate in at least one program for each of the four categories: litter prevention, beautification, waste reduction and recycling, environmental education.
- Submit a complete Merit Program Report **using the provided Excel spreadsheet format: “Merit Program Workbook 2020-21”**
- **Submit Report by June 15, 2021.**

## Mixed Office Paper Recycling Program

In order to be eligible for merit funds, schools must participate in the mixed office paper recycling program provided by P & H Properties.

## Recycling

*Solid Waste sponsored recycling hauling temporarily suspended during the 2020 – 2021 school year due to COVID-19 impacts.*

## Merit Points

Schools receive merit points for participating in programs promoting 1-litter prevention and clean-up, 2-beautification, 3-waste reduction and recycling and 4-environmental education. Merit points translate into dollars.

# Mixed Office Paper Recycling Program

*The mixed office paper recycling program is supported by P & H Properties LLC through a curbside service. In order to be eligible for merit funds, schools must participate in the mixed office paper recycling program.*

## What May Be Recycled in the Mixed Office Paper Program?

Mixed Paper includes:

- Magazines, Catalogs and School Workbooks – glossy covers are fine
- Computer or office paper (**no laminated paper**)
- Everything received in your mail (plastic windows on envelopes are okay)
- Drink cartons – empty and rinsed
- Paperboard – Tear test? Is it white fiber inside?

**Note: No brown paper bags will be accepted as paper, but will be accepted as cardboard.**

## What is required of the School?

Contact Williamson Recycles at (615) 786-0166 to order the 96-gallon rolling paper recycling bins (which are no cost to the school) and to be placed on the paper recycling pickup schedule (most schools have this program in place).

**\*Please monitor the paper recycling collection to keep non-paper items (plastic, cans, etc.) from contaminating the collection. The paper recycling rolling bins are for mixed paper only. See contamination section below for more information (pages 11-12).**

## What is the Paper Pick-up Schedule?

P&H Properties, LLC dispatches a truck to pick up paper recycling following a set schedule. This schedule is sent to environmental coordinators in the form of an Excel Workbook. The route begins early in the morning. **Schools are asked to have paper bins out for pick up the evening before the scheduled pick-up date since the trucks may come early, before school starts.**

There will be 6 routes this year. **Every other Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday** your school's paper will be picked up following a schedule. Please review the **2020-21 Paper Recycling Pick-up Schedule** to locate your school and see exact pick-up dates for the year.

# Recycling

## Important 2020 – 2021 Recycling Memo:

*Our county Solid Waste Director needs to temporarily suspend the solid waste supported recycling program this school year due to COVID-19 impacts.*

- *The department is understaffed and will be unable to keep up with service requests for the school recycling roll-off bins for the 2020 – 2021 school year. The director shared with me that it costs around \$55,000 - \$60,000 to service the school recycling bins annually. The school recycling rebates totaled to \$3,315.80 in 2019. For the time being, the director has made the difficult choice to suspend the school recycling through solid waste. This is a program Williamson County Solid Waste has been proud to offer to WCS & FSSD, and solid waste hopes to be able to offer recycling again in the future. Due to COVID-19 impacts, it is just not feasible for this school year.*
  - ***\*\*\* This suspension will not affect the curbside paper recycling program supported by our private contractor P & H Properties, nor will it affect our \$50,000 budgeted environmental merit program. Mixed paper recycling and the volunteer Merit Program will continue as usual in the 2020 – 2021 school year.***
  - *Solid waste trucks will be removing the recycling roll-off bins from each school. The bins will be stored at the solid waste department headquarters this year.*
  - ***Cardboard compactors will remain at schools, as will trash compactors. Only the standard recycle roll-off bins with the doors will be removed this year.***
  - ***Unfortunately, this means that plastics, tin and cardboard (if you do not have a cardboard compactor) will now need to go into the garbage.***
  - *Our contractor will accept cardboard and recycling drop-offs at the Material Recovery Facility if your school chooses to drive over any recycling. Please email me if you would like more information about delivering your school's cardboard and recycling to the MRF.*
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## What is required of the School?

Each school identifies a volunteer representative to act as the school's **environmental coordinator**. The coordinator can be a staff member, teacher, parent, or PTO member. The environmental coordinator is responsible for the Merit Program Workbook and seeing that it is properly filled out and turned in to me by the due date - **June 15<sup>th</sup>**.

*Please Note: Schools are welcome to have several individuals on the email distribution list (such as office staff, teachers, or interested parents/PTO members); in fact, I encourage it! Please just let me know who you would like to be on your school's distribution list to receive updates year-round on the Merit Program and also note to me who the official environmental coordinator will be. Please be sure that only one designated person (your school's coordinator) sends one final report at the end of the year to avoid confusion.*

The environmental coordinator receives the Williamson Recycles/Keep Williamson Beautiful Merit Program Excel Workbook with tabs corresponding to each of the four merit point categories.

1. Litter Prevention and Clean-up
2. Beautification
3. Waste Reduction and Recycling
4. Environmental Education

**The environmental coordinator records the school's activity in each category and turns in one final report at the end of the year.**

*Please note: It is much easier to record events and projects as they happen throughout the year. This will provide the most accurate information. For ongoing programs, please keep up with volunteer hours and numbers on a regular basis to be sure the totals are accurate.*

*Please see the attached "Merit Program Workbook Example". I have given ongoing program examples, a litter pickup example, and various event/program examples in each tab. Please call me if you need more clarification. I am also happy to meet in person if you would like additional training.*

**Training:** Williamson Recycles staff meet with environmental coordinators to go over the information in this handbook annually and are available for support throughout the year. **Please call the recycling specialist Jennifer Gosciniak Stanley with any questions at (615) 786-0166 or email [jennifer.stanley@williamsoncounty-tn.gov](mailto:jennifer.stanley@williamsoncounty-tn.gov).** Do not hesitate to call throughout the year with questions!

# Merit Points

## General Information:

The merit point program is based on the focus areas of Keep America Beautiful. The information requested in the merit program report is information required by Keep America Beautiful. To be eligible for merit funds, reports must be turned in **no later than June 15, 2021.**

## Report:

### How to Complete:

You will receive via email an Excel Workbook—“**Merit Program Workbook 2020-21**”.

The Workbook has four tabs located at the bottom of the page. The first tab is **Litter Prevention**. The next tab is **Beautification**. The third tab is **Waste Reduction and Recycling**. The fourth tab is **Education**. Please review the **Focus Areas** section of this document (page 8) for program ideas for each of the four focus areas.

### Calculating Points:

- Points are assigned to each program. Example: schools receive one point for each pound of mixed paper and each pound of recycling collected at the school.
- Points are totaled and divided by the number of students at the school establishing points per capita.
- Per capita points are totaled for all participating schools.
- The total dollar amount to be paid to schools is divided by the total points per capita assigning a dollar value.
- For each school, that dollar value is multiplied by the individual schools per capita points. This determines the total merit fund amount.

**Report Due Date: Reports MUST be turned in by June 15, 2021 to qualify for merit funds.**

***Please Note- Williamson Recycles maintains the following records:***

- ***Paper Recycling Totals***
- ~~***School Recycling Totals (plastic, aluminum/tin, cardboard from roll-off box and/or compactor behind school)***~~
- ***Presentations/tours provided by Williamson Recycles including: Environmental Reading and TreeWise (If your school participates in these programs, please do not record this information in the Merit Program Workbook.)***

# Focus Areas

## Program/Project Ideas

The following categories correspond with the “Merit Program Workbook 2020-21” tabs. Here are some category ideas to get you started!

- **Litter Prevention**
  - ✓ Litter-free sporting events, dances, or assemblies
  - ✓ Litter clean-ups around school, school grounds, or roadside clean-ups
- **Beautification**
  - ✓ Planting native plants and trees
  - ✓ Creating a butterfly garden / planting pollinator gardens
  - ✓ Graffiti removal projects- Hint: Check bathroom stalls!
- **Waste Reduction and Recycling (Think Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!)**
  - ✓ Provide recycling options at events- Call me about recycling x-frames and bags!
  - ✓ Promote paper / ~~plastic / cardboard / aluminum / tin~~ recycling in schools
  - ✓ Composting
  - ✓ Encourage REDUCE – walk/bike to school, reusable water bottles, etc.
  - ✓ Recycled Art Crafts & Projects – REUSE!
  - ✓ Host a Goodwill collection drive – REUSE!
  - ✓ Remind students and staff to make conservation a lifestyle
    - Example: Turn off water faucet while brushing teeth
    - Example: Turn off lights when you leave the room
  - ✓ Participate in Crayola ColorCycle Program  
<http://www.crayola.com/colorcycle.aspx>
  - ✓ Participate in a TerraCycle collection program:  
<http://www.terracycle.com/en-US/brigades.html>
- **Environmental Education**
  - ✓ Recycling tips during morning announcements
  - ✓ Create a school-wide video PSA
  - ✓ Tour Material Recovery Facility / field trip – call me if interested
  - ✓ Environmental information via e-blast or newsletters (try to conserve paper)
  - ✓ Recycle Relay presentation and game
  - ✓ Set up a green education booth or table at school events
  - ✓ Guest speakers
  - ✓ Environmental Reading and TreeWise programs
  - ✓ Recycling Clubs, Green Teams, Gardening Clubs



## **How Do I Know I Can Count Something as a Merit Program Project?**

Please remember that all projects reported must be completed by **unpaid volunteers**. Volunteers can be students, parents and even teachers. However, staff members who are assigned and paid to do the project, such as a janitor, coach or teacher, are NOT considered volunteers.

*For example, if your school adds a flower bed to the front of the school this can be recorded as a beautification project if students and teachers do it as a volunteer activity. It does not count as a beautification project if the school staff has been assigned to complete it as paid employees. Please let me know if you have any questions about this!*

## **I Want to Feature You!**

If you have any photos or volunteer testimonials, I would love to share those on our social media platforms! I am happy to feature schools, environmental coordinators and students on the Keep Williamson Beautiful website, Facebook and Twitter pages (listed below)!

Please keep in mind that per Williamson County regulations, all students under 18-years-old must have a parental consent form signed, which is done through the school at the beginning of each school year. Please note to me that all minors included in photos have turned in signed parental consent forms.

Website: [www.keepwilliamsonbeautiful.org](http://www.keepwilliamsonbeautiful.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/KeepWilliamsonBeautifulTN>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/KWBeautifulTN>

## **Do you have a project or program idea that you do not see listed above?**

Call Jennifer Gosciniak Stanley at (615) 786-0166! I want to help you make your school more clean, green and environmentally aware and am very open to new green ideas!

Visit [www.williamsonrecycles.org](http://www.williamsonrecycles.org) for more information about Williamson Recycles and visit [www.keepwilliamsonbeautiful.org](http://www.keepwilliamsonbeautiful.org) for more information about Keep Williamson Beautiful.

# Funds

## How Funds are Determined

- **Recycling** – ~~schools receive funds for recycling on-site~~. This does not include mixed paper. The revenue for the mixed paper goes to P&H Properties, LLC to cover the cost of collection. Schools receive merit points for each pound of paper collected.
- **Merit Points** – schools receive funds for merit points.

## Calculating Points:

- Points are assigned to each program. Example: schools receive one point for each pound of mixed paper and each pound of recycling collected at the school.
- Points are totaled and divided by the number of students at the school establishing points per capita.
- Per capita points are totaled for all participating schools.
- The total dollar amount to be paid to schools is divided by the total points per capita assigning a dollar value.
- For each school, that dollar value is multiplied by the individual schools per capita points. This determines the total merit fund amount.

**Environmental Achievement Awards** – are given to schools exhibiting the highest merits for the school year. Awards vary from year to year.

**Contests** – Each year Keep Williamson Beautiful sponsors a contest open to all students. Details are distributed second semester after Winter Holiday. Awards will be distributed after contest results are tabulated. Winning schools receive financial awards.

## How may funds be used?

Funds may be used for anything *promoting environmental education* or the purchase of *environmentally-friendly products*. Some examples include:

- X-frames to collect recycling at events
- Litter pick-up equipment
- Signs providing recycling information or other Green Team club materials
- Plants for beautification projects
- Small recycling bins for classrooms
- Reusable water bottles and totes for school use
- Water refilling stations

# Contamination

## What is contamination?

Some of you may have been told in the past that your recycling was contaminated. I want to explain what that means from a recycling point-of-view in Williamson County!

Contamination occurs when any material other than **designated** recyclables for that bin are discarded into the bin. Contamination can be caused by mixed recyclables (also known as “single stream” or “comingled” recycling) being tossed into the *wrong* bin and also by non-recyclable waste being discarded into the recycling bin.

## Can you give me some examples?

**1)** For example, below is a photo of the contents from a cardboard recycling compactor from a Williamson County school. In the photo you can see cardboard, as well as other recyclables including mixed paper. This load was considered contaminated and then marked as “single stream”. That means that the load was full of various recyclable materials that then needed to be sorted into the appropriate areas. We cannot award any recycling money for mixed recycling loads aka loads marked as “single stream” because the recycling center does not pay a rebate for contaminated loads. All recyclable materials MUST be placed into the correct recycling bin in order to receive recycling money.



**2)** Here is another example of contamination. In the photos below, you see garbage mixed in with the recyclable materials including decomposing food, pipes and wires, and just a lot of random trash mixed in with paper and cardboard. This box was labeled for “*cardboard recycling only*”.

This is bad for several reasons. Any recycling loads contaminated with “household garbage” will likely be primarily trashed for sanitary purposes. We cannot award any money if there is garbage in your recycling bin. Garbage in the school’s recycling bin also risks contaminating other recyclables properly sorted and clean from other locations. All recycling is taken to the Material Recovery Facility to be processed. This center is for recycling ONLY, and the center does not have a garbage permit.



Please ask all teachers, students, and janitorial and office staff to recycle **only** recyclable materials in the **correct bin**. All bins are labeled. Please call me at any time if you feel your school’s bins have a labeling problem so it can be corrected as quickly as possible.

## Please Read and Use These Tips! 😊

1. Please remember to put your **name** and the **school name** on *all* documents you submit.
2. Please save the title of your final Merit Program Workbook in this format: “School Name Merit Workbook 2020-21 – Environmental Coordinator Name”
3. Report each program and event as it happens throughout the year for better accuracy. Try not to leave the reporting until the end of the school year.
4. Record each event, recycling pickup, green team meeting, etc. separately. This will make entries less confusing. For example, **I would like to see 10 green team meetings listed by date as different entries, not 1 cumulative entry of meetings for the whole year.**
5. Please enter each program in the appropriate section/tab in the excel Merit Program Workbook. There are 4 sections: litter prevention / beautification / waste reduction and recycling / education. For example, a green team meeting should be recorded in the education tab. A gardening event should be recorded in the beautification tab. Please see the Focus Areas page (page 8 in this document) for more examples.
6. If you have no information to record for a section, please write “N/A” on each blank section. For example, if your school participated in no beautification projects then the beautification tab should say N/A where the first entry would normally be.
7. Please follow directions in each tab to keep reporting consistent.
  - a. If the column is labeled # of bags, please record the information in that unit of measurement. *Note: One bag should be defined as a traditional 13-gallon tall kitchen bag. 1 bag = 20 pounds on average according to Keep America Beautiful*
  - b. When asked for volunteer hours, please record the information in hours, not in minutes. For example, 30 minutes should be recorded as 0.5 hours.
8. Please feel free to add a text box with explanations of projects if you feel more information is needed, but **write only numbers in report categories**. For example, the # of volunteers categories should have only 1, 2, 3, etc. recorded. It should *not* say “2 teachers”. If you feel more information is necessary, insert a text box please.

9. **Be sure to include your planning and research time in the Total # Volunteer Hours column.**

- a. First column labeled “Length (# hours)” is the actual length of the program or event. For example, if a litter pickup lasted 1 hour total – 1 hour is the length.
- b. Second column labeled “# of Volunteers” is the TOTAL number of volunteers who helped with that specific entry- that program, event, meeting. If 1 volunteer led a meeting but another volunteer did all the set-up for the meeting, there are still 2 volunteers who helped even if only one was actually present during the event. Please call me if you are unsure.
- c. Third column labeled “Total # Volunteer Hours” is the complete total hours put in by all volunteers. For example, 2 volunteers worked a 1-hour-long event. (*That Length (# hours) first column will be recorded as 1 hour in this example.*) That is 2 hours total spent volunteering. However, one volunteer also spent 1 hour setting up and another 3 hours planning. Add those 4 hours to give the Total # Volunteer Hours a grand total of 6 hours. That total 6 hours is what should be recorded in the third column.

10. Are you unsure of what can be recycled in each bin? Please make use of the “**Quick Recycling Guide**” at [www.williamsonrecycles.org](http://www.williamsonrecycles.org) or call me at 615-786-0166 with any recycling questions at any time throughout the year! If you are unsure if something is recyclable or WHAT it should be recycled as, please check first!

- a. **Recycling Change Coming – Effective January 1, 2020, Williamson County will be accepting plastics # 1 and # 2 ONLY in the mixed plastic recycling bin at all schools.**
- b. Tip: Brown paper bags are recyclable as CARDBOARD in Williamson County. Milk cartons and paperboard are recyclable as MIXED PAPER in Williamson County. **Try the tear test-** brown fiber inside (brown paper bag, pizza box, and corrugated moving box) indicates cardboard; while white fiber inside (milk carton, many frozen food boxes like “Lean Cuisine”) indicates paper. Just tear the package and look at the color of the fiber.

11. Consider inviting other teachers, office staff, PTO members and parents to be involved to help manage the program or different events. Just be sure the information is accurately reported back to the environmental coordinator.

12. Send contamination information to the entire school population and explain the importance of correctly sorting recycling and not disposing of trash in the recycling bins. See Contamination section (pages 11 and 12 of this document) for more information.
13. Call with any questions year-round! I am happy to help you! If you are unsure if a program will count, have a new idea, do not know how to record something in the Merit Program Workbook, do not know if something is recyclable, etc... Please call me at 615-786-0166!

**Thank you to all of the wonderful volunteers involved! 😊**

**Contact:**

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