

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**COMMISSIONERS CELEBRATE AMERICA RECYCLES DAY,
ROLL-OUT ZERO WASTE INITIATIVE IN COURTHOUSE CAFETERIA**

In celebration of America Recycles Day, Commissioners have rolled-out a partnership this week with Eartha Limited and AVI Foodsystems to add the recycling of organic materials in the Ben Franklin Café, located on the 16th Floor of the Government Tower (373 S. High Street), to the county's collection of green initiatives. Commissioners hope that when combined with an already robust commingled recycling program that diverted over a million pounds of material from the landfill in 2012, this new initiative to recycle food scraps and compostable containers will help the courthouse cafeteria achieve Zero Waste, which refers to 90-percent or more diversion of generated materials from the landfill.

"We're proud of our efforts to go green in Franklin County, whether it is our LEED-Gold Courthouse or our concerted effort to buy energy-efficient vehicles," said Commissioner John O'Grady. "But as a former restaurant owner, to be one of the first food service operations, let alone the first local government, in Central Ohio to implement a plan to accomplish Zero Waste in our cafeteria makes me especially proud. Thanks to our partners at AVI and Eartha for working with us make this a reality."

Earlier this year as a part of a new contract to operate the cafeteria, AVI agreed to discontinue use of Styrofoam containers. All food containers in the cafeteria are now compostable. And for the past ten weeks, kitchen staff has been recycling food scraps, diverting on average about 500 pounds a week. Eartha Limited has been employed to haul the food scraps.

This week, a customer-facing Zero Waste Station was rolled-out. All trash cans and recycling bins have been removed from the cafeteria, and diners have the ease of simply putting everything on their tray on the conveyor belt at the Zero Waste Station. Staff in the dish room does all of the appropriate sorting to allow the County to maximize diversion from the landfill.

"Since 2006, county initiatives have moved us forward to "zero waste." Our adoption of a precedent-setting Sustainability Resolution then (683-06) has served us well," said Paula Brooks. "Partnering with Elizabeth Lessner, local female entrepreneur and founder of Eartha, to put composting into further action, moves us further toward the goal. Our family composts and we have found it to be fun, educational, and a monetary savings by reducing trash. I am very pleased to see our larger "county family" compost cafeteria waste as a way of reducing costs and providing leadership to the zero waste movement."

This initiative was brought to the Commissioners by the Franklin County Green Team, a group led by the Public Facilities Management department. The Green Team was recently honored for their efforts with a Conservation Stewardship Award from the Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District.

"I want to thank our staff and the Franklin County Green Team for pushing us to do this, and our partners at AVI and Eartha helping us get to this point," said Commissioner and Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission Board Chair Marilyn Brown. "Zero Waste is something MORPC implemented last year at EcoSummit and I'm glad we have been able to implement it in our cafeteria and look forward to doing so in the County's other food service operations."

In addition to the 500 pounds of food scraps from the kitchen already being diverted weekly, the volume of trash generated in the cafeteria has already been cut in half this week. The County expects that volume become even less as customers become more educated about the initiative, which comes with no net cost to the county. The cost to haul food scraps is being offset by having less-frequent dumpster pickups.

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