



MARION HIGH SCHOOL

PATH TO NET ZERO WASTE AWARD WINNER



THE PROJECT: MAKE MHS GREEN

In order to reduce waste, freshman Harlan Whiteford started a recycling program by retrieved the recycling from each classroom and personally delivering it to Progress Port Recycling Center. He then expanded his project to include two other student collectors—sophomore Shelby Rice and freshman Zoe Graham—servicing ten classrooms and diverting a trash bag worth of recycling from the landfill on a weekly basis. The students presented to the school board and received promising feedback and support. The group wrote and received two grants for financial support for the program.

Project Type: Recycling

Students Involved: 3

Staff Involved: 3

Location: Chicago

Grade Levels Involved: 9th & 10th

Number of Students Impacted: 1100



I made a promise to myself, I want to go district-wide by my senior year, I just finished my freshman year so we have plenty of time to do that.

– Harlan



PROCESS

Harlan's club, the Recycling Team, has a mission is to reinstate a school-wide recycling program at MHS. Towards that end, they developed a petition for students to show their support and gathered over 240 signatures. The team then created and presented a proposal to the MHS Facilities Manager, a potential funder—local company Aisin, their principal, and the school board. The proposal included plans to cover the \$1,500 annual recycling pick-up fee, source recycling bins for all classrooms, and develop educational materials to teach students how to properly recycle.

OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

The Recycling Team successfully convinced the school board to restart their school's recycling program for the 2024-25 school year. Through the financial support of the Illinois Green Schools Project mini grant and a grant from Aisin, the Recycling Team purchased recycling bins for every classroom and covered the initial start-up costs for the program. After presenting their proposal, they received an offer from a school board member to sponsor the last portion of the upcoming year's pick-up service fee. In the future, they proposed covering the expense with a \$2/student sustainability fee to help support the longevity of the program and to serve as a starter fund for future sustainability projects. Harlan's goal is to spread his school recycling program to the entire school district by his senior year.

