



UAlbany's H2O Zone Promotes 'Refill Not Landfill'

The University at Albany is taking actions to reduce bottled water use. Last year, the UAlbany community consumed approximately 500 bottles of water per day. This staggering statistic has propelled a group of students to start working alongside the University's Office of Environmental Sustainability and University Auxiliary Services (UAS) to review the issues, conduct some preliminary research and submit recommendations to the campus community by Fall 2015.

In the meantime, UAS decided to move forward with a permanent hydration station in the Campus Center, aptly named H2O Zone, which opened in early August. The station is a brightly designed 150 square foot retail space that now houses three Crysalli countertop water units with usage meters attached. Each unit has two spouts, for a total of five regular filtered water spouts and one seltzer spout. Customers can fill their reusable bottles for free anytime during the Campus Center's hours of operation.

"Setting up the Zone at this time made sense. As the students begin their research, we are able to help them assess usage, gather customer feedback and help drive the community towards a more sustainable behavior pattern from the project's onset," states UAS Executive Director Stephen Pearse.

So far the community has embraced the H2O Zone. "It's very exciting to watch our community line up to refill their bottles and welcome this change for the greater good," states Karan Verma, the UAlbany graduate student leading the charge on the initiative. "Reducing bottled water consumption can help decrease the campus' carbon footprint, and it's the safe, less expensive choice."

In addition to the H2O Zone, the University is currently working on installing more water fountains with bottle filling attachments and dining services uses hydration stations as the standard for catered events and in the all-you-care-to-eat dining rooms.

UAS will be giving out 6000 reusable water bottles during the first week of school to further encourage participation.

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