



madison children's museum



For Immediate Release

March 17, 2021

Interviews available by phone & Zoom

Images available by request

<https://madisonchildrensmuseum.org/exhibits/trash-lab/>

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Dane County, Madison Children's Museum Launch Trash Lab Mobile Exhibit

Trash Lab is a New, Thought-Provoking Mobile Exhibit That Will Educate Kids About Our Relationship with Waste & Renewables

Madison, Wis.— It's time to take out the trash, and show it off! *Trash Lab* is a mobile exhibit designed to educate and motivate residents of Dane County to create less trash and examine our relationship with waste.

Trash Lab made its first appearance opening weekend of the local Winter is Alive! festival in mid-February, and additional opportunities to view the Trash Lab will be found at the Dane County Department of Waste & Renewables website.

"We are excited about the new opportunities the *Trash Lab* will bring to our educational efforts surrounding waste and renewables," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. "We thank the Madison Children's Museum for their partnership on this project and look forward to kids throughout Dane County being able to explore and learn about the work that goes on at the Dane County landfill."

Housed in a fully accessible, 27-foot-long repurposed cargo trailer, *Trash Lab* features more than 10 playful interactive stations, engaging stories, and a wealth of data, along with compelling photography and video footage. The exhibit's whimsical exterior and immersive interior environment will capture visitors' imaginations as it travels throughout Southern Wisconsin.

Created through an innovative collaboration between the Dane County Department of Waste and Renewables and Madison Children's Museum, the new Dane County *Trash Lab* mobile exhibit encourages the community to rethink waste and consumption patterns. The exhibit explores the social justice, economic, and environmental effects of waste, connecting our local experiences to both local and global outcomes. *Trash Lab* will help citizens of all ages better understand the implications of the waste they produce, how landfills work, and new opportunities for more sustainable solutions.

"The Department of Waste and Renewables is doing amazing work at the County's Rodefild Landfill — how many people know that they're already capturing methane from the landfill to clean it and feed it

into the system that powers part of the County truck fleet?” said Brenda Baker, the museum’s director of exhibits. “We’re honored to play a role in helping them tell their story. They’ve inspired us to dig deeper into our own sustainability work, and this exhibit will likewise inspire visitors to live more sustainability.”

Trash Lab’s design guides visitors to imagine a circular consumption/waste system, where things are built to last longer, to be repurposed, and/or to be recycled.

The mobile exhibit was designed to advance equity and inclusion of solid waste and recycling education. *Trash Lab* can be hauled to events and taken to schools that may not otherwise have the means to travel to the Dane County landfill to learn about solid waste and recycling. Additionally, the *Trash Lab* is wheelchair accessible and there are booklets available for visitors who wish for a Spanish translation of the exhibit material.

“By prioritizing equity, inclusion, and accessibility we hope every child who visits the *Trash Lab* has a fun experience and leaves with a better understanding of waste and the importance of local sustainability efforts,” said County Executive Parisi.

When not traveling, *Trash Lab* will be permanently housed at the Dane County landfill, where it is expected to welcome hundreds of visitors annually as part of Dane County’s public tours of the landfill and on-site renewable energy plant. *Trash Lab* fans can follow the *Trash Lab’s* journey and tag their experiences exploring the vehicle at the Dane County *Trash Lab* Instagram page @renewaste.

Modeling Sustainable Exhibit Development

True to its mission, the project models sustainable exhibit development. It uses predominantly repurposed materials, including a reclaimed trailer, reclaimed wood and stone, and assorted objects and artifacts found in the Dane County landfill. The entire ceiling of the trailer is lined with colorful items found in the waste stream, all in perfectly good condition, including an old rake, children’s toys, dinnerware, shoes, tires, jewelry, garden supplies, and car and truck parts. The overall weight of the project is 4,552 pounds, incorporating 4,100 pounds of reclaimed parts and materials (trailer, reclaimed hardwood, hardware, stone, objects and artifacts) and 452 pounds of new materials (plywood, plexiglass, wood, hardware, and lighting). Reclaimed materials account for 90% of the exhibit’s weight.

Building the Trash Lab

Trash Lab was constructed using materials that would have been otherwise destined for the waste stream or landfill. Given the availability of similar materials across our country (and world), this exhibit could be replicated at low cost by other organizations. Moreover, as with all exhibits built by Madison Children’s Museum, the educational content is designed to be replicable, and can be used to create environmental and climate change curriculum. It doesn’t just stop there either. The *Trash Lab* exhibits were also designed with modularity, meaning the exhibits can be taken out with relative ease. This design with end of life in mind allows the *Trash Lab* to be used as a hauling trailer again at its end of life.

A Partnership Focused on the Future

Trash Lab began in 2019 through a partnership between Madison Children’s Museum and the Dane County Department of Waste and Renewables. The organizations complement each other. The

Department of Waste and Renewables engineering expertise, data-driven approaches, and innovative projects have established them as a national leader in sustainable practices in the waste management field. Madison Children's Museum added its expertise and skill in weaving important, complex issues into engaging, influential exhibits and play experiences. The museum is, similarly, a national leader in sustainable exhibit design.

The *Trash Lab* itself is already generating much interest and accolades too. The exhibit recently received recognition for Outstanding Achievement in Education from the Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin, and several other Wisconsin counties have reached out to Dane County about creating a *Trash Lab* of their own.

The Dane County Department of Waste and Renewables and Madison Children's Museum are continuing to partner on the museum's Our Future in Play initiative, which will create a lively outdoor play environment on the footprint of the museum's former parking lot behind the building. Trash and reclaimed materials will be included as core design elements.

"This exhibit aligns strongly with the museum's commitment to sustainability, which has been an integral part of Madison Children's Museum's operations and exhibits for more than two decades," says Baker.

Trash Lab was created by the Dane County Department of Waste and Renewables in collaboration with Madison Children's Museum.

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Link to Download Photos Available for Use in Press Release:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1jc-l3GtFSr_JAtcKC_Cmmc7au4iHPFib