



Taking aim at plastics: Four Greenport businesses chosen for plastics reduction pilot program

by [Denise Civiletti](#) Mar 1, 2017, 8:57 am

A Boston-based nonprofit dedicated to reducing the health and environmental impacts of consumer products has targeted the Village of Greenport for a federally funded plastics reduction project.

The Product Stewardship Institute will partner with three eateries and a fish market in the village to assess the businesses' "plastic footprint" and develop strategies for reducing their reliance on single-use plastic products, Vivian Fuhrman of the institute told Southhold Town Board members at today's work session.

The organization chose Greenport because it is a waterfront tourist destination. Plastics have a particularly harsh impact on marine life and water quality, Fuhrman said.

Alices' Fish Market, Bruce & Son, Lucharitos and Tikal 1 were selected to partner with the organization. The project aims to assess the extent of plastics in the local environment, assess their impacts, educate residents and visitors about the risks of plastic marine debris, help the participating businesses devise plans that result in a 40-percent reduction in plastic wastes and develop model municipal polices for plastic waste reduction.

Each of the four participating businesses will be eligible for a grant of up to \$1,500 to help them transition from disposable plastics to affordable alternatives, as well as develop a voluntary source reduction plan and educate customers.

The local business owners met with Fuhrman and her colleague Megan Byers yesterday at Greenport School to discuss the project's roll-out. They were joined by teachers Brady Wilkins and Stephanie Pawlik, who are interested in getting students involved in the project too.

The business owners were all interested in lessening the impact of their businesses on the environment.

"We're right next to the water and we do a lot of take out," Lucharito's owner Marc LaMaina said.

"Bags, food containers, utensils... We also serve a lot of drinks with straws. When I saw that viral video on Facebook of a sea turtle with a plastic straw stuck in its nose, it really hit home," LaMaina said. "It really affected me," he said.



"I want to make sure we do everything we can to lessen our impact on the environment, so we can all sleep a little better at night," LaMaina said.

Bruce and Son owners Kassata and Scott Bollman said moving toward sustainability and away from the disposable culture is important to them.

They bought the business from Scott's father last year and started phasing out plastic bags and containers, using sturdy cardboard and paper bags instead. They also eliminated plastic single-serve containers for syrups and now use metal serving containers instead.

"We'd like to learn about alternatives to plastic utensils," Scott Bollman said. There are cornstarch-based utensils on the market as well as bamboo. "But some of these are crazy-expensive," he said.

"I know we will now start asking customers if they need plastic utensils, rather than just automatically including them, because some of them will inevitably end up being discarded," Kassata Bollman said.

Helen Giron, who with her father owns the Mexican-Guatemalen restaurant Tikal on Front Street, said they are very enthusiastic about participating in the project.

"We want to help the town and help the earth," Giron said. She's worked on beach clean-ups with her school-age child and was amazed at the amount of trash, especially plastic, littering the shores.

The location of her fish market “right on the water” motivates Mary Bess Phillips to look for alternatives to the plastic wrap and plastic bags used by Alice’s Fish Market.

“We need to make sure our fish gets to our customers’ homes fresh and clean,” Phillips said, “but at the same time we’d like to explore alternatives that don’t have the impact of plastics on our environment, especially the marine environment.”

One of the first tasks the Product Stewardship Institute will undertake is a visual survey of the shoreline to observe the extent and types of debris. The survey will be done according to protocols established by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This will help answer skeptics who wonder, like Southold Councilman Bob Ghosio did yesterday, whether plastic pollution is really an issue in Southold Town, which he said has a very successful recycling program.

“Have you already quantified it locally?” Ghosio asked. “If we’re handling recycling properly, these items shouldn’t be a problem, really,” he said.

“I’ve never come across a place that has take-out food and doesn’t have a problem,” Fuhrman answered.

The PSI project will also measure the selected businesses’ “plastic footprint” and work with them to shrink it.

After that, the group will work to develop model municipal policies that could be adopted by the Town of Southold and the Village of Greenport, Fuhrman said, as well as a plastics source reduction “tool kit” that could be used by other businesses to follow the example of the four participating in the pilot project. Education and consumer awareness is also a central goal.