

GUIDE TO RECYCLING GREEN TEAMS AT SPORTS VENUES

A ROADMAP TO HELP SPORTS TEAMS AND VENUES DEVELOP A SUCCESSFUL RECYCLING GREEN TEAM

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About NRDC

NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council) is a national nonprofit environmental organization with more than 1.4 million members and online activists. Since 1970, our lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists have worked to protect the world's natural resources, public health, and the environment. NRDC has offices in New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Bozeman, and Beijing. Since 2004, NRDC has been a world leader in professional and collegiate sports greening. Learn more about the NRDC Sports Project at www.nrdc.org/sports and @NRDCGreenSports.

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Cover photo: Cardinals Recycling Green Team volunteers collect recyclables during the 2011 World Series games in St. Louis, Missouri.
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Preface

Over the past few years, great progress has been made in advancing recycling and composting at sports venues throughout North America. Indeed, some venues are reporting recycling diversion rates in excess of 80 percent. Overall, the recycling rate throughout professional sports has grown appreciably since NRDC launched the first environmental partnerships with professional sports leagues and teams almost 10 years ago. This is good news because few environmental policies provide as many benefits as does recycling, which:

- saves energy;
- reduces the need for landfilling and incineration and helps avoid the pollution produced by these technologies;
- conserves natural resources, such as timber, water, and mineral ores, from both domestic and imported sources;
- reduces the pollution caused by manufacturing plants that typically rely on virgin resources;
- helps expand and protect manufacturing jobs in the United States; and
- engenders a sense of community involvement and responsibility.

Though recycling draws its direction from science and smart resource economics, it is grounded as well in a philosophical belief that people throughout the world are interdependent, however isolated we might feel. Teaching children the value of recycling, as many sports venues now do, helps cultivate an awareness of our relationship to others and our responsibilities to one another. Recycling confirms that people can do what is efficient and still do what is right.

Despite the progress made in increasing recycling at sports venues, there is much that remains to be done. Numerous sports venues still have low recycling rates, some as low as 20 percent or lower, and overall recycling rates throughout all of professional sports may average below 40 percent. While this is a big improvement over where we were just 10 years ago, low recycling rates remain an unfortunate fact because an underdeveloped recycling infrastructure is collectively costing professional sports teams millions of dollars annually, and opportunities to reduce global environmental impacts are being wasted.

In 2006, with sponsorship from Poland Spring and guidance from NRDC, the Boston Red Sox pioneered the use of Recycling Green Teams to enhance the collection of recyclable cups and bottles. The Recycling Green Team uses unpaid volunteers to collect recyclable plastic and aluminum containers from fans between innings; in exchange, the volunteers get to view the game when they are not collecting containers. Shortly after the Red Sox inaugurated its Green Team, NRDC worked with Major League Baseball to implement Recycling Green Teams at the World Series and All-Star Game. Over the past 10 years,

NRDC has helped other leagues, teams, and sports venues develop Recycling Green Teams that have diverted hundreds of thousands of plastic and aluminum containers away from landfills and incinerators to be recycled.

Recycling Green Teams are a fan-friendly, cost-effective, and innovative approach that enhances the collection of recyclable containers at sports events. Setting up a Recycling Green Team is valuable because when it comes to effectively collecting recyclables at sports venues (or anywhere), we need to use every tool in the tool box. The movement to reduce reliance on landfills and waste combustors is international, and the concept of “zero waste,” once merely a dreamer’s aspiration, is now a rallying cry throughout North America and Europe. This NRDC Guide is designed to help all teams and leagues that aspire to achieve a “zero waste” operation learn from NRDC’s unparalleled hands-on experience setting up Recycling Green Teams at some of the most visible and important sports events in the world, including the World Series, professional league all-star games, and the US Open tennis championships, and at many regular-season games as well. I hope you find this guide of use.



Allen Hershkowitz, Ph.D.
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How to Set Up a Recycling Green Team at Your Sports Venue

Developing a team of recycling volunteers is an effective way to enhance your sports facility's environmental profile while helping your housekeeping staff collect plastics and other recyclables. It can also be a great opportunity to involve environmentally oriented sponsors who might want to co-brand the program.

A Recycling Green Team is a group of preselected volunteers who collect recyclables and promote your organization's commitment to the environment through direct engagement with fans on game day. This NRDC Guide includes four sections to help get your Recycling Green Team started:

- How to Recruit and Retain Volunteers
- How to Create Fun Fan Engagement
- How to Ensure Smooth Operations
- Sample Tools

HOW TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN VOLUNTEERS

Recycling Green Teams can include employees of the facility or its sponsors, but most often they are composed of volunteers from local environmental organizations or other community groups, student organizations, and fans. The volunteers in your Recycling Green Team are likely to vary from event to event, so this is a great opportunity to engage a broader demographic and connect your environmental programs to your community outreach work.

A diverse Recycling Green Team formed from multiple community groups will be able to attract more volunteers and can also be a great source of feedback on your environmental initiatives. Many nonprofits and student groups are willing to help recruit, screen, and train volunteers. However, it is important that you work with your partner organizations to identify selection criteria for volunteers, decide who will be responsible for ensuring that the volunteers meet these criteria, and confirm that volunteers are properly trained before their first shift. Ideally, you will be able to find a community or student group willing to provide coordinators who will serve as liaisons between the venue and the volunteers. In some cases, your facility's or team's human resources or community outreach staff may prefer to handle the recruitment directly to facilitate background checks on volunteers. For guidance on the total number of volunteers to recruit, see "How to Ensure Smooth Operations," below.

The program is easier to manage with repeat participants. Therefore, to retain volunteers, identify ways to make the experience fun and simple. Volunteers are motivated to return when they feel their work a) grants them access to events they would not otherwise have access to, b) is important, c) is part of an official program, and d) includes them in a team of people who are fun to be around. In some cases, the opportunity to volunteer at an iconic jewel event or other showcase event is incentive enough. It can be more difficult to recruit volunteers for a regular or preseason game, and this is where incentives can make a big difference. At minimum, volunteers should be provided with:

- a daily pre-event briefing,
- a place to store their belongings,
- a branded, official Recycling Green Team T-shirt and/or hat to identify them to fans,
- a place to stand or sit and watch the event live when they are not collecting recyclables, and
- a voucher for a snack and drink during the event.

More advanced volunteer programs might offer additional social events for Recycling Green Team members or a monthly raffle of autographed items, exclusive meet-and-greets, game tickets, or other prizes.

A RECYCLING GREEN TEAM CAN:

- increase recycling rates;
- increase fan knowledge about your commitment to environmental stewardship;
- encourage fans to take environmental behaviors home;
- enhance your organization's connection to your community's recycling program; and
- potentially save your organization money by diverting recyclables from landfill.

HOW TO ENSURE SMOOTH OPERATIONS

Successful volunteer Recycling Green Teams smoothly integrate into your existing event operations. Ask your community partner to identify Green Team coordinators, and designate one or two members of your own staff to be coordinators as well. Both types of coordinator are needed. All Recycling Green Team coordinators will need to work with event management, guest services, security, and janitorial staff to determine the instructions for volunteers and the best methods for collecting recyclables in order to maximize fan engagement while minimizing disruption of the viewing experience.

Here are the key steps to get your Recycling Green Team initiative off to a good start:

Assemble the volunteer list well in advance: Some events can require as many as 40 or 50 volunteers. It is unlikely that all of them will be obtained from only one organization. At NRDC, which coordinates Recycling Green Teams for Major League Baseball, the National Basketball Association, the U.S. Tennis Association, and some teams, volunteers come not only from NRDC's staff, but also from partner organizations, family, and friends within NRDC's network. It takes time to coordinate your volunteers' commitments, so send an announcement requesting Recycling Green Team volunteers at least six weeks in advance of the event. Be sure to provide enough time to complete any necessary credentialing of volunteers before the event.

Brief volunteers before the day of the event: A few days before the event, bring all volunteers together for a briefing in order to explain to them the importance and visibility of their work. Make sure to remind all volunteers that in doing this work they are representing the host team and the organization that assembled them. Explain that being part of a Recycling Green Team is an ecologically valuable undertaking, and that it is real work. Brief all volunteers on logistical details related to their arrival and on-site work so they are not surprised to learn of restrictions or requirements on the day of the event. Let them know they are expected to work during their entire time on duty, with the exception of one quick meal break. Appendix A to this guide is a copy of the pre-event briefing memo used by NRDC to educate its own Recycling Green Team of volunteers in advance of the 2009 World Series games at Yankee Stadium.

The Boston Red Sox pioneered the use of Recycling Green Teams at Major League Baseball games. The Red Sox developed a sponsored Poland Spring Green Team that provides a group of 30 to 50 local college student volunteers at each game. The volunteers spread throughout the seating areas at Fenway Park during the half-inning breaks of each game to gather plastic bottles and cups. Since 2008, in partnership with NRDC, Major League Baseball has expanded this great work to all MLB "Jewel Events" by incorporating Recycling Green Teams at All-Star Games, All-Star Events, and World Series games.

Confirm items being collected and methods of collection:

At the pre-event briefing, inform the Recycling Green Team what items they will be collecting. Typically, Recycling Green Teams collect only specific recyclable materials, such as aluminum cans, plastic bottles, and/or plastic beverage cups. It can be helpful to show the team physical examples or pictures of all the types of items they will be collecting. Let the volunteers know that if fans want to give them other materials, they should feel comfortable suggesting that those other items be placed in the proper bins on the concourse. To help prepare the volunteers for this, provide examples of items that will be used at the event that they should NOT collect. Also, describe the collection gear that the volunteers will be given, including collection bags, gloves, T-shirts, and hats. Collect T-shirt sizes from all volunteers well ahead of the event. Recommend that all volunteers wear comfortable shoes and casual attire for the event.



Photo courtesy of Paul Hanlon/MLB

In 2011 The Ohio State University launched the Zero Waste at Ohio Stadium program, making that stadium the largest in the country to attempt a “zero waste” initiative. At each game, 10 to 12 student volunteers work for 8 to 12 hours to collect recyclables from tailgating and in-stadium guests. The day after the game, an additional 6 or 7 student volunteers sort recyclables. Through this and other efforts, the university has reduced stadium waste by 62 percent since 2010 and achieved a top overall waste diversion rate of 98 percent in 2012.

Photo courtesy of The Ohio State University



Photo courtesy of Alice Henry/NRDC



Consider educating the volunteers about the venue’s environmental program: You might also choose to educate the volunteers about the venue’s environmental program in case fans ask them about what the venue is doing for the environment more broadly. If the Recycling Green Team is sponsored, inform the volunteers about the sponsor’s relationship to the venue’s environmental work. If the Recycling Green Team is currently your only method of public recycling, go to mlb.greensports.org/waste/recycling to learn about setting up a more robust recycling program at your venue.

Check in and brief volunteers on the day of the event: Instruct volunteers to arrive with enough time to receive any needed credentials and to attend a pre-event briefing. At this briefing, inform volunteers where they can store their belongings; distribute T-shirts, hats, and/or other gear identifying volunteers as members of the Recycling Green Team; and hand out plastic bags for collecting the recyclables. You should also conduct a walkthrough of the venue to point out where each volunteer will be working, identify drop-off locations for full collection bags, and indicate where volunteers should go to view the event when not working. Depending on the type of sports event, Recycling Green Team volunteers may be positioned only inside the sports venue (e.g., at a baseball, basketball, or hockey event), in the aisles and on the concourse, or throughout tailgating and food court areas around the venue and at the venue’s entrances (e.g., at a football or tennis event). Recycling Green Team volunteers should be instructed not to obscure views or interfere with fans going to purchase food and beverages during the event.

Ensure that venue staff, concessions employees, security, and guest services are informed about the presence and logistical needs of the volunteers: Your staff will need to brief guest services and security staff about the Recycling Green Team’s activities and responsibilities to ensure that team members can carry out their tasks and view the event when not working. Supply volunteers with the mobile phone numbers of their assigned coordinators so that they can reach out if they get confused or need additional guidance.

Remind all ushers about the Recycling Green Team’s work immediately preceding the start of the event: Depending on the size of the venue, one or two Recycling Green Team coordinators from the volunteer organization should consistently roam the venue to assure that all procedures are being followed and that the volunteers are performing their tasks correctly. The organization’s coordinators should be prepared to introduce themselves to ushers in the venue to remind them about what the Recycling Green Team shirts look like, when the Recycling Green Team members will perform their duties, and where the volunteers will be standing when not working to watch the event.

Collect recyclables: Generally, Recycling Green Team volunteers, working in pairs, should walk to the bottom of their designated section and collect recyclables while walking back up toward the concourse. Collections should take place at the most convenient regular breaks in the event. For example, for baseball games, collections should take place at every half-inning break, with the last recycling sweep occurring at the conclusion of the seventh inning. For arena events such as basketball and hockey games, we suggest that pairs of Recycling Green Team volunteers walk up the aisles during

television time-outs and between period breaks. Ideally, one pair of volunteers should be assigned to sections of three aisles that connect to the main concourse. If you have a limited number of volunteers, we suggest assigning Recycling Green Team pairs to work only the lower concourse.

Drop off bags of recyclables: When a volunteer has a full bag of recyclables, she or he should tie the bag tightly and bring it to the designated location, or should give the bag to a roaming coordinator to do so. In no case should the Recycling Green Team member leave full bags of recyclables lying anywhere on the concourse.

Alert attendees about the Recycling Green Team: Use digital signs, audio announcements, in-arena videos, a PSA or a PA announcement to inform guests of the Recycling Green Team. For baseball events, we suggest at least two announcements during the event, with the first one made at the start of the first recycling sweep and the second one at the start of the fifth inning. At other games, we suggest an announcement at the start of each recycling collection. In addition, you can arrange to have an animation and announcement run across the digital signage and use the in-arena video to show enthusiastic fans and Recycling Green Team volunteers collecting recyclables. The in-arena video can also have a “recycle cam,” like a kiss cam, to capture people caught recycling for display on the digital sign.

Shift lengths and check out: Determining a volunteer shift length depends on the event as well as the incentives and amenities you can provide volunteers. Typical shifts are 3-4 hours long including the pre-shift briefing. When volunteers complete a shift, make sure all volunteers remove any branded Recycling Green Team gear and turn in any credentials. This is important for security reasons to ensure volunteers don't use the volunteer gear or credential to conduct any non-recycling team business. In some cases volunteers may be allowed to keep their credential in order to stay and view the event as part of their incentive for volunteering. Check with the venue to determine how they would like to coordinate the return of credentials.

For the 2008 US Open, NRDC recruited 60 volunteers from its staff to perform 14 days of outreach. Each day, three shifts of volunteers engaged guests in conversations about what they can do to protect the environment. Each guest who spoke with volunteers received a wallet card with 10 eco-tips and a NYC Metro Card transit pass.



Photo courtesy of Alice Henly/NRDC

HOW TO CREATE FUN FAN ENGAGEMENT

A Recycling Green Team offers opportunities to engage fans in fun and interactive ways with your environmental efforts and, perhaps, the efforts of your sponsors as well. Here are some tips:

Interact with the team mascot and cheer team and/or the sponsor's promotion team: The mascot and cheer team can accompany some of the Recycling Green Team volunteers to draw attention to their work and give away prizes to those who recycle. If a sponsor already has a promotion team, its staff can accompany Recycling Green Team volunteers and promote the recycling effort. These interactive groups can also take photos with fans who are recycling and post them on social media sites so the fans can be recognized.

Connect the recycling initiative with giveaways, information booths, and wallet cards: Link the launch of your Recycling Green Team to a giveaway of eco-friendly items (e.g., reusable shopping bags, or bottles or towels made with recycled content) to all attendees. Include messaging on these products, or distribute a brochure or wallet card explaining your organization's environmental initiatives and green tips fans can use to reduce their daily environmental impact. (You can find a list of green tips for sports fans at www.nrdc.org/sports). If the Recycling Green Team will be doing only one or two recycling sweeps, they can distribute these materials. Volunteers can also spend one of their shifts in the concourse at an information booth, or walk around the venue talking to guests about the environmental program.

Photo courtesy of the Houston Dynamo



Sample Tools

- Sample Volunteer Shift Assignment Sheet
- Sample Recycling Green Team Volunteer Pre-Arrival Information Sheet
- Sample Volunteer Briefing Script for Recycling Green Team Coordinators
- Sample Recycling Green Team Volunteer On-Site Packet

RECYCLING GREEN TEAM VOLUNTEER SHIFT ASSIGNMENTS

Date:

Recycling Green Team Coordinator: *[Name, Phone Number]*

| Volunteer Name | Cell Phone | Volunteer Shift | Section Assignment |
|----------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Babe R. | (000) 867-5309 | 6:30 pm–10:00 pm | 113–133 |
| Mickey M. | (000) 111-2222 | 6:30 pm–10:00 pm | 113–133 |
| M. Richter | (000) 222-3333 | 6:30 pm–10:00 pm | 133–143 |
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RECYCLING GREEN TEAM VOLUNTEER PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION SHEET

Thank you for volunteering for *[insert organization's]* Recycling Green Team at *[insert venue name]*. Your time is greatly appreciated by *[insert all partners involved in supporting the Recycling Green Team]* as we work together to encourage sustainability and greening practices throughout our day-to-day operations.

1. Please arrive at *[insert door/entrance]* at *[insert time]*. Please bring a government-issued photo ID and travel light; there will be no bag storage or place to leave valuables *[or indicate if there will be storage]*.
2. We encourage you to take public transit. If you need to bring your car *[insert parking instructions]*.
3. You will be met at *[insert door/entrance]* by *[insert contact name and phone number]*, who will issue you a credential.
4. You will be given a Recycling Green Team T-shirt, a Recycling Green Team hat *[add or delete clothing items as appropriate]*, and recycling bags. Please wear your T-shirt as the outermost layer of your clothing at all times. We recommend you dress comfortably *[insert clothing recommendation]* and wear comfortable walking shoes (no heels or open-toed shoes).
5. Do not sit in stadium seating areas at any time during the event, and do not ask players for autographs.
6. You will receive a food voucher redeemable for 1 food item and 1 drink at a food concession stand. At no point during the event are you to consume alcohol.
7. Thank you for your time and dedication to helping us protect the planet. If you want to know more about our environmental efforts, please visit *[insert website]*. You can learn more about what the sports industry is doing to save the environment and what you can do to help at www.nrdc.org/greening-sports/default.asp.

VOLUNTEER BRIEFING SCRIPT FOR RECYCLING GREEN TEAM COORDINATORS

Instructions:

Use the following script to walk volunteers through the volunteer packet. Please bring pens for volunteers so they can take notes on their "cheat sheet."

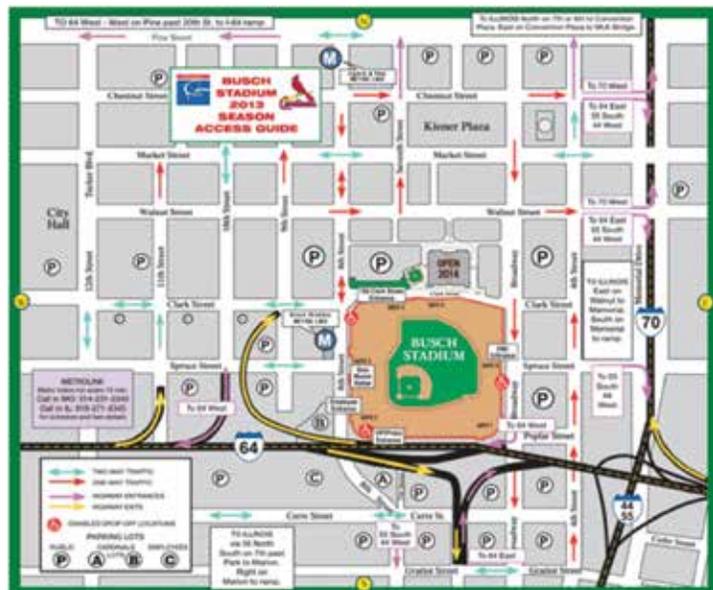
Script:

Thank you for volunteering for *[insert organization name]* Recycling Green Team at *[insert venue name]*. Your time is greatly appreciated by *[insert all partners involved in supporting the Recycling Green Team]* as we work together to encourage sustainability and greening practices throughout our day-to-day operations. I'm *[insert coordinator name]*, and I'm here to assist you. Please take a pen to write down my cell phone number and some other key information as we go through this quick briefing. My cell is *[insert cell phone number]*.

It is our goal to create a safe, fun, family-friendly environment and entertainment experience for all fans and guests by providing exceptional customer service. While you are wearing your Recycling Green Team shirt and badge, you are representing *[insert organization name]* and you become an extension of the Guest Services team. Please greet people with a smile. If they have a question you cannot answer, please direct them to a Guest Services staff member in *[insert color of jacket or other descriptor]*. Now let's go over key details for today.

- We'll start with a roll call, and I will give you your shift assignments. Please write down your section numbers and your volunteer partner's name. *[Use the Volunteer Shift Assignment Sheet to conduct the roll call and tell people their section numbers and the name of their partner.]*
- Thanks. Now let's review the instructions. *[Read each instruction. Depending on time available, you can have a different volunteer read each instruction. Add clarifications after each instruction is read, and check for questions. When done with all instructions, confirm with volunteers that they know where to bring full bags of recyclables, and encourage them to write down the location on their cheat sheet.]*
- Now let's review some cool green facts about the venue. Although our focus is recycling, we encourage you to interact with guests and let them know about our overall environmental program. *[Read the facts aloud, then ask volunteers to write down their favorite one on their cheat sheet.]*
- Last but not least, if you meet a guest who wants to know what more they can do to help the environment, here are some green tips you can share. *[Distribute wallet cards or other information. See www.nrdc.org/greenbusiness/guides/sports/greentips.asp for sample tips.]*

Thank you for your time. Let's have fun together and help everyone recycle!



RECYCLING GREEN TEAM VOLUNTEER ON-SITE PACKET

Cheat sheet

My Recycling Green Team coordinator is:

Cell Phone:

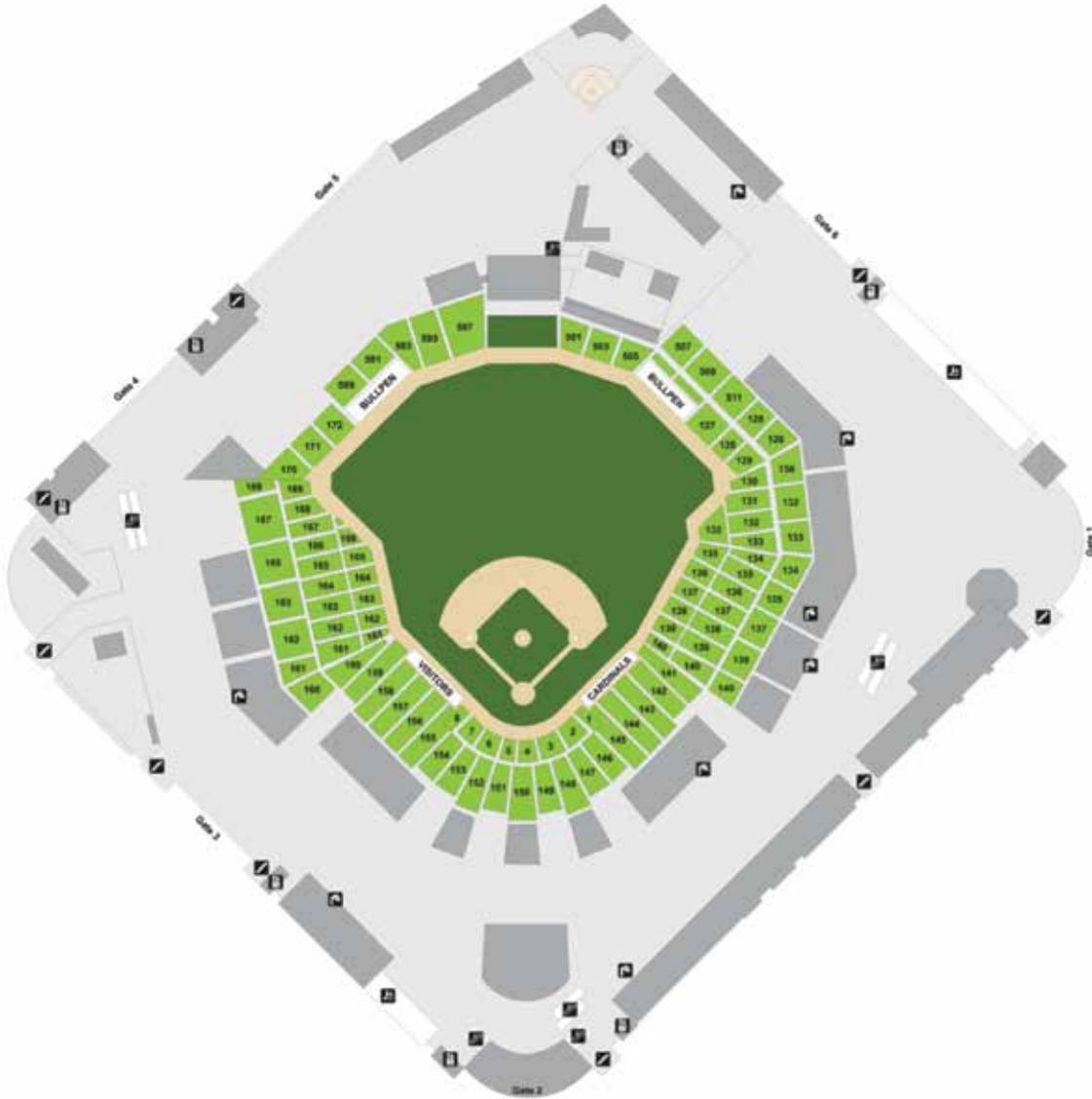
My volunteer partner is:

Cell Phone:

I am collecting recyclables in section(s):

Once recyclable bag is full, I bring it to:

My favorite green fact(s) about the venue:



RECYCLING GREEN TEAM VOLUNTEER ON-SITE PACKET (CONTINUED)

Instructions:

A few simple instructions for your time volunteering at *[insert venue or event]*:

1. You will collect recyclables at *[insert time indicator or other cue, e.g., the end of every half inning (every three outs), 10 minutes into period break, during a commercial break in the game]*, and you must be out of the aisle and back to the concourse level by *[insert another time or other cue]*. Please be sure to thank individuals for recycling.
2. You will be collecting recyclables throughout the event until *[insert end of volunteer shift]*. After this time, you may stay to watch the event at _____ *[leave blank for volunteer to write in where he or she will be standing to view the event]*, but please remove your Recycling Green Team shirt to indicate that you are off duty.
3. You will collect recyclables in your assigned sections. Make sure to rotate aisles. This will ensure that all sections receive recycling service throughout the game. Return to _____ *[leave blank for volunteer to write in where he or she will be standing to view the event when not collecting]*. No collecting should be done during active game play, in order not to block the view of fans. Introduce yourself to ushers and security staff as part of the Recycling Green Team.
4. When collecting recyclables, please proceed down to the bottom of your aisle and walk back up, asking for any *[insert specific items being collected, e.g., plastic cups, plastic bottles, and aluminum cans only]*. If the facility has containers for collecting compostable waste or other recyclables, please encourage fans to dispose of their other waste properly.
5. Once a bag is full, bring it to the central drop-off location at _____ *[leave blank for volunteer to write in]*.
OR: Once a bag is full, give to a runner or facility employee who can drop it off.
6. Please remember: Our goal is to create a safe, fun, family-friendly environment and entertainment experience for all fans and guests by providing exceptional customer service. While you are wearing your Recycling Green Team shirt and badge, you are representing *[insert organization]*, and you become an extension of the Guest Services team. Please greet people with a smile, and if they have a question you cannot answer, please direct them to a Guest Services staff member in *[insert color of jacket or other descriptor]*. Do not sit in the ticketed seats at any time during the event.

Thank you for your time and dedication to helping us protect the planet.

***[INSERT VENUE/TEAM/EVENT NAME]* GREEN FACTS**

- Insert one or two facts about venue energy efficiency.
- Insert one or two facts about venue water conservation efforts.
- Insert one or two facts about venue waste reduction efforts.
- Insert one fact about green cleaning efforts.
- Insert one fact about sustainable food efforts.



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