



## SUSTAINABLE MARBLEHEAD: From sparking joy to igniting a waste-free lifestyle

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A few years ago, the Netflix series “Sparking Joy” was a hit. Based on Marie Kondo’s best-selling book, “The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing,” Kondo advised us to “keep only those things that speak to the heart, and discard items that no longer spark joy.”



Instead of simply discarding clothes and household goods that we no longer need or make us happy, what if we, as consumers, started the decision-making process at the beginning when we desire something new and then ask ourselves these questions: Do I really need this? Can I repurpose something I already own? Can I borrow this instead?

Many other similar decision-making tools and tips are presented in the book, “The (Almost) Zero Waste Guide: 100+ Tips for Reducing Your Waste Without Changing Your Life,” by Melanie Mannarino. I recently spoke with the author who stressed the importance of shifting gears to reduce waste in

your life.

“The daily practice of reducing waste quickly becomes a total-life mindset,” said Mannarino. “For example, once you get in the habit of taking only the food you can eat, or in using leftover food to build another meal, you start to look at other things differently, too. You’re looking at your kid’s ripped pant leg and wondering if you can turn those pants into shorts. You’re taking one napkin from the restaurant dispenser, not a handful. These little habits add up...”

What can you do in Marblehead to reduce waste? Check if a book or e-book is at the Abbot Library or visit one of the many Little Free Libraries around town for your next read before buying new; shop at the Magic Hat at Veterans Middle School for gently used (and sometimes brand new!) clothes and household items; visit the Swap Shed at the transfer station on Saturday mornings; and join the “Buy Nothing Marblehead” Facebook group to post items you don’t need anymore and look for free items you might need. You can also buy and sell used items on “Marblehead Garage.”

Many other lifestyle changes can be added gradually. For example, reduce plastic waste by switching to laundry detergent sheets, using bar shampoos and conditioners, and packing your sandwiches and snacks in reusable containers instead of plastic baggies.

Mannarino said, “There’s power in reducing your water consumption, or in growing your own food, or in shopping for vintage handbags — not just economic power (though that is certainly a benefit), but also in knowing that you are resourceful and creative and can provide the comforts you need/want while also preserving resources for everyone else.”

One specific form of waste reduction that Sustainable Marblehead tackles is single-use plastic water bottles. Earthday.org reports that Americans purchase about 50 billion water bottles per year. Besides the litter created if not recycled, over 99% of plastic is made from chemicals sourced from fossil fuels, making plastics a huge factor in climate change. We advocate the use of reusable water bottles to eliminate this type of unnecessary waste.

To accomplish this, Sustainable Marblehead provided two water-bottle filling stations at the Marblehead Festival of Arts the last two years: a 300-gallon “Quench Buggy” from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, with power donated by Arnould Gallery and Framery, and our 125-gallon “Water Monster.” Though this year’s rainy weather brought fewer visitors, we estimate that we still eliminated 500-plus plastic water bottles by offering these refillable stations.

Additionally, at the recent Marblehead-to-Halifax race we estimate a whopping 3,000 plastic water bottles were saved over three days using our Water Monster, which was stationed at the Boston Yacht Club and kept cool by their donation of nearly 15 blocks of ice.

In August, we’ll eliminate even more plastic water bottle waste at a Marblehead Housing Authority party, where Sustainable Marblehead will offer a water station, and has purchased enough reusable water bottles for every child living in public housing.

“The Marblehead Housing Authority is committed to sustainability, and we are proud to partner with Sustainable Marblehead,” said Terri Tauro, Housing Authority Commissioner and Cathy Hoog, Executive Director. “Together we have worked on several tree and landscaping projects, and we are pleased to expand our relationship to include waste reduction. We wish to thank them for providing water and reusable bottles not only at

Sustainable Marblehead’s two water-bottle filling stations at the Festival of Arts prevented the use of about 500 plastic water bottles over two years. COURTESY PHOTO

our events, but at so many others in town.”

For more information and ideas on how to reduce waste and lead a more sustainable lifestyle, please check out our website at [sustainablemarblehead.org](http://sustainablemarblehead.org). Visit our “10 Simple Things You Can Do for the Planet” at the bottom of the homepage.

Elaine Leahy is the executive director of Sustainable Marblehead.

**Elaine Leahy**

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