

Roll Out the Rain Barrels!



The League of Women Voters of Oak Park River Forest is proud to coordinate "Roll Out the Rain Barrels" in Oak Park and River Forest beginning on April 22 to run throughout the summer months of 2009. More than 100 artists and barrel sponsors have participated in this public environmental awareness program. The purpose of the project is to have fun and educate the public about water conservation.

Every time it rains in Oak Park and River Forest, downspouts and street runoff mix directly with raw sewage in the combined sewers under our streets. The rainwater then needs to be treated as raw sewage by the Greater Metropolitan Water Reclamation District. Using rain barrels and disconnecting downspouts from storm sewers are two ways to divert clean water from rooftops back into the Lake Michigan and Mississippi watersheds, rather than treating it in Stickney for eventual release downstream into the Mississippi River. Water from rain barrels can be used to water gardens and lawns, reducing the demand for Lake Michigan water.

If you live east of the continental divide running through Oak Park, the water you put back into the ground helps replenish Lake Michigan. If you live west of the divide, the water you put back into the soil, replenishes the Mississippi watershed.

Rain barrels are not the only way to help your watershed. Disconnect your downspout to let it run into the lawn or garden. Think about your use of clean tap water in your everyday life activities. The ideas on the rain barrels offer simple ways you can help conserve water. All the water facts are listed below, with plenty of internet sites to learn more about water ecosystems and conservation.

A bike route map will be published by June 1 that will indicate the location of each barrel along with its sponsor and artist, to allow people to view most of the rain barrels on display.

Many of the barrels will be auctioned off at the end of the summer.