

# 2025 Poster Contest

Call for Entries



## Thank You Waste Diversion Teams!

All of Colorado's K-12 students are invited to showcase their artistic talent and appreciation for Colorado's waste diversion teams by participating in our annual Poster Contest. This year, students are encouraged to either create a poster demonstrating their appreciation for members of waste diversion teams who collect and sort trash, recycling and composting in schools, communities or in waste diversion facilities OR create a poster pledging to sort responsibly for the safety of our waste diversion teams. Waste diversion includes trash, recycling and compost. Team members are made up of custodians and cafeteria workers, collection truck drivers and loaders, and facility sorters. Please share this information with others who may be interested in participating!

### Thank you to our sponsors of this year's poster contest:

City of Grand Junction, Eco-Cycle, Town of Mountain Village, Town of Vail, Greensheen Paint and Christina Smedley & Jimena Baldino for Spanish Translation.

### PRIZES

One first place winner from each age group will receive a **\$100 gift card**.

Each first place winners' teacher/classroom/school will receive a **\$100 gift card for room supplies**.

Winning artwork will be distributed to waste diversion facilities across the state and used to help promote Colorado Recycles Week, celebrated the third week in November and America Recycles Day, November 15th.

**ENTRY DEADLINE:**  
April 11th, 2025

**This year, along with submitting artwork to us, students are encouraged to either display their art in their window, door, or yard (allowed by property rules) for their local team to see their appreciation or give their art to a waste diversion team member they know.**

We hope your school, the schools in your district, your organization or business will participate! The contest rules and judging criteria can be found on the next few pages. We've also included talking points about waste diversion teams for teachers, should they want to provide a mini-lesson to students while introducing this contest. We look forward to having you participate.

### Please contact us if you have any questions

Recycle Colorado | [info@recyclecolorado.org](mailto:info@recyclecolorado.org) | 720-927-7288

# Poster Contest Rules

Please read the following contest rules carefully. Only posters that meet the contest rules will be considered.



## Deadline

Poster files or images and release forms should be received by Recycle Colorado **no later than April 11th, 2025**. You will receive a confirmation that your poster has been received on the day of or after the submission deadline. Winners will be notified the week following the deadline.

## Eligibility

All students (kindergarten through high school) in Colorado public and private schools (including home schools) and youth organizations are eligible.

## Poster Requirements

Posters or images of creations must be original artwork by students. Copyrighted characters (such as Superman) or copyrighted clip art will not be accepted.

**Materials:** Students may use a variety of media, such as watercolor, pen and ink, crayon, markers, or computer graphics. Artwork should be easy to see, read and understand. Students are encouraged to incorporate recyclable materials in their creations.

**Layout:** Landscape (horizontal) or Portrait (vertical) layout will be accepted. Images of creations or posters in .jpg, .png, .pdf format will be accepted. Posters can be any size.

**Release Form:** Each poster or creation image must be accompanied by a completed release form (see page 8). A poster not accompanied by a completed release form will not be eligible for further judging.

**Submission:** Only electronic submissions are accepted (scanned copies or photos of hand-drawn posters). The electronic submission should capture the original poster or creation without editing, and images should be clear (not blurry) and well-lit.

This year, along with submitting artwork to us, students are encouraged to either display their art in their window, door, or yard (allowed by property rules) for their local team to see their appreciation or give their art to a waste diversion team member they know.

**Please use our online form (<https://forms.gle/YrPKRVRpCrjZhaA49>) to submit a picture of your displayed artwork or email it to us with the release form ([info@recyclecolorado.org](mailto:info@recyclecolorado.org)).**

## Theme

Students are encouraged to incorporate the theme “Thank You Waste Diversion Teams!” into their artwork (see theme explanation on page 4). Students are encouraged to either create a poster demonstrating their appreciation for members of waste diversion teams who collect and sort trash, recycling and composting in schools, communities or in waste diversion facilities OR create a poster pledging to sort responsibility for the safety of our waste diversion teams. Waste diversion includes trash, recycling and compost.

## Judging Procedure

The posters will be grouped into one of the following five age group categories:

- Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade
- 3<sup>rd</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> grade
- 5<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade
- 7<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade

The best poster from each grade category will be selected based on the judging criteria listed below. One finalist will be awarded in each grade category.

## Judging Criteria

1. Conveys clear message through text and artwork. (25 points)
2. Exhibits creativity, originality and artistic quality. (25 points)
3. Displays visual clarity and correct spelling - easy to read and understand. (25 points)
4. Addresses the theme listed on page 4. (25 points)

## Prizes

### For every poster contest participant

Teachers/Schools/Organizations, please photocopy and give a “Certificate of Recognition” to all students that participate to acknowledge their efforts (found on page 8).

### Poster contest winners & their teachers/classrooms/schools

One first place winner from each student’s grade category will be awarded a \$100 gift card. Additionally, each classroom/teacher/school of the first place winner for each grade category will be awarded a \$100 gift card for room supplies. Depending on funding, additional winners or other prizes may be announced.

Winning artwork will be distributed to waste diversion facilities across the state and used to help promote Colorado Recycles Week, celebrated the third week in November and America Recycles Day, November 15th.

### **Please Remember:**

- Entries must meet the poster requirements specified on page 2 and **must be submitted with the completed release form on page 8.**
- All artwork submitted becomes property of Recycle Colorado and may be reproduced without remuneration to the artist.

# 2025 Theme: Thank You Waste Diversion Teams!

This year's theme is all about giving thanks to those who you don't see doing important waste diversion jobs in our state. Without our trash, recycling, and compost teams we would live in messy communities. Our local teams help us meet our waste diversion goals by making sure that your waste/recycling/composting gets properly disposed of or diverted. We need them to ensure our planet stays clean and healthy.

## What is a Waste Diversion Team?

A waste diversion team is made up of several different people that work to collect, properly dispose and sort your trash, recycling and compost. Waste diversion includes trash, recycling and compost. Team members are made up of custodians and cafeteria workers, collection truck drivers and loaders, and facility sorters. As a team they work together to get your items from your collection bin to the landfill or recycling/composting facility. Once materials are at a recycling facility, a sorter helps to go through the material to pick out things that can't be recycled and ensures the things that can be recycled go to the correct area to be sent off and made into something new. Composting facilities and landfills utilize large machinery to ensure the right things are there and are properly getting disposed of or composted.

## Why are Waste Diversion Teams important?

Martin Luther King Jr., a very famous civil rights activist, stood up for the rights of people just like you are standing up for your belief in recycling. During one of his campaigns he spoke on how "all labor has dignity" which included waste team members.

## From Kamala Harris's 'The Truths we Hold':

As part of [his campaign] effort, Dr. King had gone to Memphis in 1968 to join black sanitation workers in their fight for basic decency. Day in and day out, these workers rode the trucks that hauled away the city's garbage. The city did not provide uniforms; instead, workers were forced to dirty their own clothes on the job. They worked long hours without water to drink or a place to wash their hands. "Most of the [trash cans] have holes in them," one sanitation worker recounted. "Garbage leaking all over you."

For this hard work, critical work, they received little more than minimum wage, the lowest possible wage that the government will allow employers to pay. They didn't get overtime pay. They had no sick leave. If they were injured at work and needed time to heal — as happened often — they were likely to be fired. And if bad weather made trash collection impossible, they were sent home without pay. Many didn't even make enough money to feed their families.

When the city refused to pay the families of two sanitation workers who [were injured on the job], it became too much for the others to bear. With great courage, 1,300 Memphis sanitation workers went on strike, refusing to work while demanding safer conditions, better pay and benefits, and recognition of their union. They were on strike for their families, for their children, and for themselves. It was, above all else, a battle for dignity. The signs they held at marches said simply: I AM A MAN.

When Dr King arrived at Bishop Charles Mason Temple, in Memphis, on March 18, 1968, a crowd of 25,000 people had gathered to hear him speak.

"So often we overlook the work and significance of those who are not in professional jobs, of those who are not in the so-called bog jobs," he said. "But let me say to you tonight, that whenever you are engaged in work that serves humanity and is for the building of humanity, it has dignity and it has worth."

**Your waste diversion teams are important in your community and schools. They may even be someone you care about. Show them your support using your creativity!**

## Keep Your Waste Diversion Team SAFE

Your poster this year could be a pledge to help make collection safer for your local waste diversion team. You can pledge to:

- Properly dispose of things that can be dangerous for teams like batteries, paint, light bulbs, etc.
- Dispose of broken glass and sharp objects in boxes or unbreakable bins that are taped shut
- Empty all your recyclables of any liquids or food
- Make sure the right item goes into the right bin. Trash should not go in compost or recycling bins.

## What happens if you don't throw and sort things right?

- Throwing things that need to be disposed of in a special way can lead to dangerous fires, and soil and water pollution. This would include things like batteries, lightbulbs, paint, etc.
- In Colorado, battery-related fires have increased by 41% in the last five years. Batteries cause an average of 19 fires per year at recycling facilities annually.
- When you put harmful chemicals or sharp objects in your collection bin, you are not the last person to touch it. Waste diversion teams who pick up your things can get burns and scratches from harmful materials.
- Contamination is the term waste diversion teams use to describe something that doesn't belong in their materials. For example, a plastic bag should not be mixed in with compost or shoes shouldn't go in the recycle bin. When contamination occurs, it prevents valuable things from being recycled or composted and can be harmful to the people and machines sorting material.

## What is it like now as a waste diversion team member?

Waste diversion team members now receive benefits from their employers to help support themselves and their families. They have time off, sick/injury leave and are provided and required to wear personal protective equipment or PPE to keep them safe. PPE for team members includes:

- A bright colored, reflective vest to make them visible to others on the roadways and work spaces.
- Hard hats to protect their heads.
- Safety Glasses to protect their eyes.
- Gloves to keep their hands clean and safe from sharp objects or dangerous items.
- Masks (as needed) to prevent inhaling harmful things.
- Ear plugs to protect from loud noises
- Steel toed boots that have a protective metal that surrounds a person's foot to protect their toes.

## Who is on a waste diversion team? How do you become a waste diversion team member?

**Custodians and Cafeteria Workers** are the people in your schools that help ensure trash, recycling and compost are picked up, sorted properly, and brought to the collection bin to go to the landfill or recycling/composting facility. They are like human collection trucks and loaders that go around the school to pick up the things that need to be thrown away or recycled. Most often custodian and cafeteria workers apply for their job and get training to ensure they do the job right. They want to ensure they help keep your school clean!

**Drivers** are the people who drive the large truck or pickup and operate the machinery to grab and dump your bin. To become a driver you must be 18 years of age, earn your Commercial Drivers License (CDL), be able to lift heavy objects, and have a good driving record. A CDL is like a drivers license but for those who drive vehicles for their job that may require extra skills and training.

A **Loader** can join a driver on their collection route for the day. These two can work as a team to pick up material, move items that are in the truck's way, or help residents pull bins to the truck. Sometimes the loader also checks bins to ensure the right materials are in the right bin. If they are not, they are responsible for tagging a bin to let the owner know they need to change how they throw.

A **Waste Team Manager** is responsible for helping to ensure the waste team has what they need to succeed and work in a safe environment. They also help plan out routes to ensure everyone's trash, recycling, or compost is collected on time for their collection day.

**Sorters** are the people who work in a recycling facility that go through the things we recycle, picking out things that can't be recycled and ensuring the things that can be recycled go to the correct area to be made into something new. Some of the people go through the material that is moved by conveyor belts and others use machines like a bailer to squeeze a bunch of material together to make a bale that is easily moved around. Forklifts are used to move bales around and load them onto trucks to be made into something new. Sorter can apply for positions within recycling companies and get training to ensure they do the job right and safely.

**Landfill & Compost Facility Operators** help to transport, move, and take care of material once it is delivered to them. Large teams use big machines to cover, turnover and bury things. Smaller teams may use smaller equipment or human power to take care of material. At both landfills and composting facilities, the workers monitor their piles of material for safety concerns.


In a landfill, workers need to monitor groundwater levels and safety as well as air pollution. As things break down in a landfill, they release methane which can contribute to climate change. Landfills work hard to try and reduce the methane that is released. There are special positions for people who monitor groundwater and landfill gas that require some extra schooling and training.

In a composting facility, workers need the temperature, microbes, and nutrients to ensure the compost is breaking down the way it should and is healthy. Microbes and nutrients are what we want in compost because this is beneficial to the plants, our soils and the environment where compost is spread. Training courses and additional schooling is available for composters to take to learn more about compost monitoring and benefits.

**What does the waste diversion team do with the things in my trash/recycling/compost bin?**

Part of the waste diversion team's job is to ensure the collected materials are sent to the places they need to go to be properly disposed of or remade into new products. More details on the Journey of Recycling can be found on our website from the 2022 poster contest: [recyclecolorado.org/assets/Journey%20of%20Recycling.pdf](https://recyclecolorado.org/assets/Journey%20of%20Recycling.pdf)

**What are the differences between each collection bin and trucks?**

Front Loader	Side Loader	Rear Loader	Roll Off Truck	Pick Up
				
Used to collect large dumpsters from businesses multi-family living spaces.	Used to collect bins from businesses and residential homes.	Most common kind of truck. Used to collect materials from bins & dumpsters from businesses, multi-family living spaces & residential homes.	Used to transport large dumpsters and bins. For larger projects, businesses and heavy things.	Used to collect smaller amounts of material or from hard to navigate places.

Small Bins	Waste Carts	Bear Proof Bin	Front Load Dumpster	Roll Off Dumpster
				
Used to collect small amounts of material.	Used to collect material from businesses and residential homes.	Used to prevent bears & other animals from rummaging through bins.	Used by businesses & multifamily living spaces to collect large amounts of material from many sources.	For larger projects, businesses and heavy things. Moved by roll off truck.

## Discussion Questions

- Who is a part of your school's waste diversion team? What do they do?
- Who picks up your trash, recycling, or compost in your community? Do they drive a big garbage truck or a smaller truck? Do people grab your things for pick up or does a machine do it? What color is the truck?
- What do you put things in for the waste diversion team to pick up in your community? Do you use a big bin or dumpster, a crate, or a small bin? What color is it?
- Do you know someone who is a part of a waste diversion team?
- What are some things you shouldn't put in a trash bin? What about a recycling or compost bin?
- Have you ever tried to sort your recycling or compost? What was it like? What were some of the things that gross you out? What about your trash? Have you ever had to grab something out of it?

## Additional resources to use in your classroom

- Ask a waste diversion team member Instagram Reels: <https://www.instagram.com/recyclecolorado/>
- Interview your custodian or cafeteria workers on their waste diversion roles.
- WM is a business that employs waste team members to collect waste, recycling and compost in Colorado. Check out their "Recycle Often. Recycle Right." Curriculum: <https://legacy.wm.com/content/dam/wm/documents/RecyclingResources/Kids-Resources/Grades-3-5-Curriculum.pdf>
- Day in the life of a trash collector in Longmont, CO: <https://longmontcolorado.gov/news/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-trash-collector/>
- Recycling 101 with WM - <https://www.wm.com/us/en/recycle-right/recycling-101>
- SciShow Kids: How Recycling Works - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLRVPum9cp4>
- Check out what happens in Boulder County. Materials are picked up and brought to the recycling center to be processed: <https://youtu.be/5YaTpL8nl7c>
- Republic Services is another waste team company that comes to pick up your recyclables in Colorado. They make sure that your recyclables are taken to the right locations to be sorted and made into something new!
  - Recycling Simplified: <https://recyclingsimplified.com/for-educators/>
- Video about the circularity of organics recycling: [https://a1organics.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Composting-Loop\\_VO\\_V1.mp4](https://a1organics.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Composting-Loop_VO_V1.mp4)
- Organic Matter Matters! Value of water retention capacity when healthy soil has an increased level of organic matter from finished certified compost: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VrSQzs9efbX8XV8lOiScEoN49Bvr8PQa/view?usp=sharing>
- Compost contamination breakdown: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/16RQgPleovOkLhr4ylpaS62pV1DckT8n9/view?usp=sharing>

# Recycle Colorado Poster Contest Release Form

This form must be completed and submitted with each student's artwork.  
You may also submit online at <https://forms.gle/YrPKRVRpCrjZhaA49>

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

School/Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Grade (circle one):      K-2nd              3rd-4th              5th-6th              7th-8th              9th-12th

School/Organization Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State and Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

School/Organization Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher/Contact Name \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher/Contact Email \_\_\_\_\_

Student/Parent Email \_\_\_\_\_

Student/Parent Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that this poster was created entirely by the student above and is the student's original artwork and there are no copyrighted characters used. I agree that it may be offered for public display or publication at some time during or after the contest. I understand that this poster becomes the property of Recycle Colorado and may be reproduced without remuneration to the artist. The only information that will be released is the student's name, school, and grade.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date