

# Zero Waste Events are coming to Los Alamos

By TIFFANY PEGODA, Los Alamos Zero Waste Team

There's a new eco-friendly trend that's sweeping the nation, zero waste events. A zero waste event is any gathering (party, wedding, sport event, etc.) that aims to divert the waste generated away from the landfill. Zero waste events are being held all over. Leading the way are large institutions like Arizona State University, Clinton Global Initiative University, Walmart, Crate & Barrel and Duke University. Last year, the Los Alamos Zero Waste Team partnered with PEEC to host the first zero waste event in Los Alamos with the Bear Buffet dinner before Bear Festival.

In February 2019, the Phoenix Open golf tournament was the world's largest zero waste event, with over 700,000 attendees. The event sponsor, Waste Management, successfully diverted 100% of the waste from the landfill by composting, recycling, donating and utilizing a nearby waste to energy facility. Waste Management required all vendors to use only compostable or reusable items, as well donating uneaten food. All the trash cans were removed and replaced with "waste sorting stations." In addition, each station was staffed to help ensure the waste was placed in the proper receptacle.

Mark your calendars for these Zero Waste Events happening in Los Alamos this year:

**Saturday, April 27, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

**Earth Day Festival**

**Los Alamos Nature Center**

This year, the Earth Day Festival will be zero waste! To help out, look for the zero waste sorting stations staffed with a volunteer to help sort your waste. Additionally, PEEC is encouraging all booths, vendors and food vendors to reduce their waste wherever possible. Vendors are advised at registration to rethink giveaway items and use ecofriendly packaging and sustainable materials. Sirphey will be serving food in compostable packaging made from sugar cane. Kettle corn will also be served in compostable cellophane bags. PEEC will provide water bottle filling stations, so BYOB (Bring Your Own Bottle). Other ways to reduce waste is to take Atomic City Transit, ride your bike or walk to the festival.

**Friday, May 24, 7 p.m.**

**First Summer Concert**

**Ashley Pond**

Zero Waste Los Alamos and Los Alamos County Environmental Services will be at sorting stations ready to answer all your zero waste questions. All of the following summer concerts will also be zero waste!

**Saturday, July 13, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.**

**Science Fest Discovery Day**

**Ashley Pond**

Los Alamos's biggest event of the year will be zero waste as well! Get ready for a day of zero-waste fun at Ashley Pond this summer. We encourage attendees to plan ahead for zero waste gatherings by bringing their own water bottle, reusable napkin and utensils when possible. Decide ahead of time to refuse giveaways that won't be useful and talk to your kids about this decision too! Zero waste events aren't limited to large gatherings. You can make your child's birthday party, a picnic at the park, meetings and any other event zero waste, regardless of the scale.

**Plan your zero waste event with these helpful tips:**

- Request RSVPs. Knowing how many people you will be feeding cuts down on leftover food waste.
- Plan ahead for composting collected waste. Options include composting at home, finding a friend with chickens or taking waste to a composting facility.
- Send electronic invitations to reduce the amount of paper waste produced by your event.
- Create sorting stations, offer compost and recycling bins next to every trash can.
- Skip paper and plastic plates and utensils. Use reusable or compostable items whenever possible.
- Buy food in bulk to minimize packaging. Eliminate single serve items such as ketchup packets.
- Before your event gets underway, show and tell people where and how to sort their waste.

- If volunteers are available, utilize their time to stand guard at the waste sorting stations to make sure all waste goes to the correct places. Then, have your volunteers help sort trash at the end of the event.
- Send leftover food home with your guests or freeze it for eating later.
- Track your progress. After the event determine how much waste you diverted from the landfill. Be sure to share the good news with your guests and on social media! After all, spreading the word about reducing waste is one of the best ways to improve the future of our environment.