

Green Graduation Parties

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The 2009 Governor's Fishing Opener was hosted in White Bear Lake on May 8 and 9. It was a community event with thousands of people from across the state. Many were there to fish in our region's namesake natural resource and all were there to enjoy our community spirit and hospitality. We are rightfully proud of our natural environment and want to protect its beauty for our own enjoyment and for generations to come. We worked hard to make events for the Governor's Fishing Opener better for our environment, and I was happy to be part of those efforts. It is also an opportunity to think about how we can integrate environmentally friendly practices into other summertime events we attend. Graduation parties, for example, are just around the corner.

As everything around us turns green, why not make that graduation party a little greener too? There are many simple things you can do to reduce the environmental impact of backyard events. Ramsey County is a leading partner in developing an online resource to help people green their events, large and small. Green Gatherings - www.mngreengatherings.org - has a variety of resources to help you, including a "Go Green at Graduation" toolkit with several resources to make your graduation party more environmentally friendly.

Simple ways to go green while hosting your graduation party include:

- Distributing invitations electronically to reduce paper waste. If you prefer paper invitations, purchase invitations made from a minimum of 30% post-consumer recycled content paper. Buying recycled products helps complete the recycling loop.
- Using decorations that you or others can reuse in future years or consider borrowing decorations from a friend that has thrown a similar party.
- Providing reusable plates, cups, silverware and linens. If you do not have enough reusable items, consider asking to borrow some from a friend or renting items.
- Traveling to the local farmer's market for fresh, locally grown food to serve to your guests.
- Providing containers for food waste recycling and composting any waste food from your party in your backyard compost bin.
- Providing recycling containers for cans, bottles and other recyclables produced at your party. Ramsey County has recycling containers to lend to community groups for bottle and can recycling at short term events. Contact askeh@co.ramsey.mn.us or call 651.266.1199 for more information.

Don't underestimate the resources you can save by implementing just a handful of simple green strategies. Recycling just one aluminum can saves enough energy to power a computer for three hours. Think of all the homework that could get done during that time!

Green Gatherings is about helping people make green choices to build a lasting environmental legacy. Your local public health professionals are eager to provide tools and information that allow all gatherings, large and small, to be more environmentally sustainable.

Going green doesn't have to be difficult. Simple changes to your graduation party can ensure a greener future for all 2009 graduates. For more tips and resources on how to green your graduation party, visit www.mngreengatherings.org.

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