

February 22, 2017

To AASHE STARS staff:

Grand Valley State University (GVSU) has inspired an upcycling practice that not only repurposes old and unused items, but serves a community need through several organizations.

The project involves creating T-shirt tote bags out of old and unusable T-shirts from GVSU's lost and found. The tote bags are then donated to a local food pantry. An Upcycling Committee gathered T-shirts from lost and found, specifically looking for old T-shirts that would have been thrown away due to stains or holes. To minimize the need for additional materials and skillsets, this project employed a no-sew method of cutting and tying T-shirts into tote bags to be used to transport grocery items from a local food pantry. This local food pantry previously used disposable plastic grocery bags. The program provided the local food pantry with 131 tote bags to be reused. The environmental impact of eliminating plastic bags was a purposeful goal of this project, but moving beyond environmental sustainability into the realm of social sustainability by working with an organization to positively impact food security was also a rewarding outcome of this upcycling project.

We believe this practice is eligible for a STARS Innovation credit because its reach is beyond community service and campus engagement. The upcycling project demonstrates commitment to sustainability while introducing a new and unique way to engage in sustainable practices on campus.

Through the upcycling project, Grand Valley State University exhibits commitment to sustainable practices in not only economic and environmental sustainability, but social sustainability as well. This project goes above and beyond community service and campus engagement as it combines elements of both, while bringing a practice to the campus community which was previously absent. Students, faculty, staff, and community members have been exposed to sustainable practices that they can bring back to their own communities and implement in their lives. Reducing waste, serving community needs, and giving new life to old items were central components that were carried out during this project.

Bobby J. Springer
Associate Director
Office of Multicultural Affairs
Grand Valley State University