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Non-biodegradable waste is a serious hazard to our planet. We are generating tons of trash, which sits in landfills without decomposing; we are using energy, water, and other valuable and limited resources to create things that will shortly afterwards end up in a landfill. One of the ways we can help reduce the amount of non-biodegradable waste and the use of precious resources is through recycling. For my action plan I decided to address the problem of trash and the need to recycle by focusing on creating a system of recycling for tennis balls and tennis ball cans. I had noticed at the tennis courts near where I live that many tennis balls and cans were ending up in the trashcans every day. In fact, the 300 million tennis balls made each year create 18,750 tons of waste that will sit in landfills. For my action plan I addressed the need for more recycling by trying to create a system of recycling at the tennis courts near to where I live. I found an organization that collects old tennis balls, and depending on the condition of the balls, re-pressurizes them or grinds them up to use as rubber, often for playgrounds. I set up a bin at the courts near me to collect tennis balls that would have been thrown out, put signs on the courts about recycling plans, sent an email to members of the club, and also put a bin and sign at a nearby tennis and running store. During the fall I collected and sent to the organization Rebounces.com to be recycled about one thousand tennis balls.

Unfortunately, I have had less success with recycling the tennis ball cans. After receiving much misinformation and calling various people who work for the Waste Reduction and Recycling Section of the Montgomery County Department of

Environmental Protection, I have found that my area does not recycle tennis ball cans, mainly because of the aluminum ring at the top. I am still trying to find a way to recycle them though, and have a meeting scheduled with the chief of the Waste Reduction and Recycling Section of the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection.

My father, Michael Waldman, has been incredibly helpful through out the whole process; he has been working on the project with me by providing connections with the people at the tennis courts, by helping me through the process of dealing with the local government and the recycling facilities, and by helping me set up my recycling program.

I have learned much from this project; it has taught me how my small actions can actually create something useful; I have the power to make a small contribution to help the environment. It has shown me how to deal with administration, take initiative, and achieve something in the real world; these are skills I will always value. The affect of my project in the broader community is that one thousand tennis balls have been saved from ending up in landfills, and people in my community have been forced to acknowledge the environmental effects of their actions. A high school student who saw my bins for recycling tennis balls, decided to set up a similar system at the courts he frequents. I explained how to set up the system for recycling tennis balls and provided him with the signs I had made. He now collects tennis balls completely independently of the system I have at my courts. It is incredible to see how once people start recycling and making a difference, the motivation and action can spread. Hopefully my community will learn more about the importance of

recycling from this project and hopefully the earth will benefit as well. The dire situation of our planet has been my main motivation to work on this project, and hopefully other people too will see the dangerous our planet is facing and will become motivated to help the world as well.

My action plan is still a work in progress, and hopefully will continue to grow and expand. I hope to continue collecting and recycling tennis balls this spring and summer, eventually creating a long lasting program at the courts. I would like to spread the program to other tennis clubs in the area, with the ultimate goal being to have all tennis balls in the area being recycled. I hope to find a way to recycle tennis ball cans as well, and I will continue to work with Montgomery cCunty to achieve this goal. Ideally, one day, tennis, and all sports and activities, will be entirely sustainable, and we can have a healthy planet for generations to come.