



(l to r) Mary C. Padasak '09, Michael Jahne '09, Madison Quinn '08, and Bridget Murray '10, all members of the Environmental Conservation Organization (ECO).

# Talkin' Trash

The average American produces 4.4 pounds of trash a day. Now multiply that by the more than 300 million people who populate the country.

## Recycling Factoids

Incinerating 10,000 tons of waste creates one job; landfilling 10,000 tons of waste creates six jobs; recycling 10,000 tons of waste creates 36 jobs.

It takes approximately one million years for a glass bottle to break down at the landfill.



Recycling one aluminum beverage can saves enough energy to run a 100 watt bulb for 20 hours, a computer for three hours, or a TV for two hours.



Source: Environmental Protection Agency

That's a lot of trash. And with current landfills surpassing their limits, reducing the amount we throw away is a necessary step in reducing the environmental strain on our planet.

To illustrate just how much trash people produce in a week, eight student members of Clarkson's Environmental Conservation Organization (ECO) teamed up for a revealing demonstration. Trading their school bags for garbage bags, the group tied large plastic bags around their shoulders, lugging all their non-recyclable waste with them, 24 hours a day for seven days.

Drawing the attention of baffled fellow students, their professors and neighbors, the students used the questioning stares as a way to open the lines of communication about this serious environment issue.

"It gave us a chance to talk to them about the waste we generate, and what to recycle," says senior Madison Quinn, president of ECO.

For the group of environmentally conscious demonstrators, the total at the end of the week was 10 pounds or 30 gallons, and 16 sore shoulders.

That's less than the national average, but still substantial. Quinn says that the weight of her trash was an unremitting (and uncomfortable) reminder of what she throws away.

Some of the heaviest and most cumbersome pieces of trash were things people toss out in abundance, Quinn said, like juice boxes, coffee cups and fast-food wrappers. "What if you were responsible for all the trash you generate instead of just throwing it away? There are a lot of things you don't realize you throw away on a regular basis."

The demonstration caught the attention of area television stations and National Public Radio. The students were also featured in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Quinn and her environmental law professor, Chris Robinson, came up with the idea based on a radio report they heard. Coinciding with Clarkson's effort to increase recycling on campus, ECO is hopeful that the rest of the campus will catch on to the effort and become more environmentally conscious. ♦