



**Muhlenberg College Drastically
Decreases Bottled Water Waste
with the Elkay® EZH2O™**

Project Overview



Plumbing Products Division

Project	Muhlenberg College
Location	Allentown, PA
Problem	Excessive environmental waste resulting from bottled water purchased and consumed on campus.
Solution	Increase barriers to single-serving, disposable plastic bottle water; Implement sustainable solutions, such as The Elkay EZH2O Bottle Filling Station.
Results	Prior to this effort, approximately 15,000 plastic water bottles were consumed on campus every week. Today, that number has been reduced by 92 percent and Muhlenberg College had diverted more than 350,000 plastic bottles from landfills.

Introduction

Muhlenberg College, located in the Lehigh Valley of eastern Pennsylvania, is among the colleges and universities leading the charge towards minimizing environmental damage from plastic bottle waste. In 2009, students in an



environmental communication course researched, designed and introduced to campus the "Just Tap It" project, an initiative dedicated to decreasing bottled water consumption.

Nearly every sector of the college joined forces with the student organizations that supported the cause to successfully implement the project. This collective effort included involvement from Muhlenberg College's Student Government, the Environmental Action Team, the President's Office, the Greening Committee, Plant Operations, Dining Services, numerous faculty members and additional administrative offices.

By 2010, the “Just Tap It” project had successfully reduced bottled water purchases on campus by 92 percent. Among the many integral components implemented by Muhlenberg College to make this effort a success was the installation of the Elkay EZH2O Bottle Filling Stations across campus. The “Just Tap It” project offers a model for reducing bottled water usage across colleges and universities, and for fostering a culture of campus-wide sustainability.



Sustainability 101

The inspiration for this sustainability effort stemmed from a course on Environmental Communication taught by Dr. Lora Taub-Pervizpour in 2009. After learning about the high environmental costs of commercial bottling and the leniency of regulations on bottled water, the class collectively concluded that tap water is a safe, sustainable alternative to single-serving plastic bottled water. These inspired students then proposed a massive reduction in Muhlenberg College’s bottled water consumption.

Tapping into Action

The Environmental Action Team (EnAcT) officially kicked off the “Just Tap It” project and worked with the Muhlenberg College Student Government to determine a suitable solution that was agreed upon by all involved parties. The ultimate decision was to eliminate disposable water bottles from student meal plans, making them only available for purchase in



dining locations. To help facilitate this adjustment, Dining Services changed the structure of the meal plan to allow for a variety of food and beverage substitutes for bottled water.

A Smart Solution

Along with increasing the barriers to plastic bottled water, Muhlenberg College recognized the importance of ensuring that free, filtered water was readily



available and easily accessible on campus. After extensively researching the options for bottle filling solutions, the Greening Committee determined that the Elkay EZH2O Bottle Filling Station would best meet the school's needs. The EZH2O is designed to provide end-users with a rapid fill of cold, filtered water for their existing bottles and cups, offering an alternative to drinking and discarding plastic bottles.

“We looked at a variety of bottle filling systems available in the marketplace, and found that the other options were either too susceptible to damage or overly expensive,” stated David Rabold, facilities director for Muhlenberg College. “The key factors in our decision to install the Elkay EZH2O included its rugged, durable design, its coolness factor that made it attractive to students and the fact that the retro-fit models could be easily adaptable to the existing Elkay water coolers on campus.”

The EZH2O is also available with the Visual Filter Monitor, which is an LED display that visually communicates the presence of a built-in WaterSentry® Plus filtration system. This filtration system reduces unpleasant tastes and odors frequently detected in unfiltered water, while also decreasing the amount of harmful impurities such as lead, cysts and sediment from reaching the end-user.

Conservation on Campus

The first step was the installation of an initial EZH2O Bottle Filling Station at the Student Union. Over the next year, the Plant Operations team led the installation of additional units throughout campus, each of which was labeled with a “Just Tap It” sign. A variety of different EZH2O models were installed, including bi-level and single-level retro-fit units, as well as in-wall models.

To help promote the use of the bottle filling stations, the school provided reusable water bottles to all enrolled students, and each incoming student now receives a reusable bottle as an orientation gift. In addition, EnAcT started selling reusable water bottles in the Student Union to offer a convenient, environmentally-friendly alternative to buying disposable plastic bottles of water.

Graduating to Green

Today, a total of 48 EZH2O Bottle Filling Stations are installed on the Muhlenberg College campus. The units can be found in most of the main campus buildings, all new construction areas and nearly every floor of the school’s dormitories.



Since the EZH2O features a Green Ticker™ that dynamically updates the running total of bottles that have been saved by using the EZH2O to refill, the school can use that as one tool to track the success of the “Just Tap It” program. As of March 2011, Muhlenberg College had diverted a total of 352,539 plastic bottles from landfills. With the positive response to the bottle filling stations from students, faculty and staff, as well as the numerous requests for additional units, the number of bottles saved continues to rise.

This data helps to quantify the success of Muhlenberg College's impressive achievements with the "Just Tap It" initiative.

Prior to this effort, approximately 15,000 plastic water bottles were consumed on campus every week. Today, that number has been reduced by 92 percent. The majority of campus community members now also have a deeper appreciation of the issues surrounding bottled water consumption. The next phase of the "Just Tap It" project is to continue building on these accomplishments and experimenting with new ways to expand upon this momentum.

For more information about the "Just Tap It" project, click [here](#). If you'd like to learn more about the Elkay EZH2O Bottle Filling Station, visit the featured EZH2O product page at www.elkayusa.com or by clicking [here](#).