

WESTERN STAFF AND STUDENTS ARE ECO-CHAMPIONS

London, ON, March 15 -- The local environment is the big winner as the result of efforts by eco-champions, the staff and students at The University of Western Ontario, to reduce plastic bags.

Since August 2009, The Book Store at Western and Books Plus has saved 168,934 bags. "If the trend continues at the same rate, we will save close to 200,000 plastic bags in a single year," says Chris Mouritzen, Shipping, Receiving and Facilities Manager at The Book Store.

A strong advocate for the initiative, Mouritzen cites the students at Western for making the reduction in plastic bags successful: "Our students' support made all the difference."

In August 2009, staff at The Book Store and Books Plus introduced Bring Your Own Bag, a program to phase out plastic bags, and started charging customers five cents for plastic bags with their purchases. The initiative led to a 90% reduction in plastic bags as customers chose reusable bags or put their purchases in their backpacks.

To encourage the use of reusable bags, The Book Store gave away 11,000 cloth bags to students, faculty and staff as an option to the stores' biodegradable plastic bags. On average, reusable cloth bags will last the same lifespan as more than 700 disposable plastic bags.

In a partnership with ReForest London to reduce plastic bags since 2007, The Book Store and Books Plus have donated \$1500 to the local group to help plant and care for trees in London.

In recognition of their efforts, Western's community has awarded the 2010 Western Green Award to The Book Store and Books Plus.

"Thanks to the cooperation and support of our customers, we will be able to continue our annual donation to ReForest London this April with a contribution of \$1000," says Mouritzen. "It reflects very well on Western that we have the sort of community that has embraced the initiative so wholeheartedly."

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Check out the ROC Report at <http://www.rocreport.uwo.ca>



Stephanie Mo and Sabrina Jim, two Western students who work at The Book Store, helped make the plastic bag phase-out a success.