By Jessica Snyder
Rotunda Reporter

In 2008, Longwood University began a major push to go green by declaring sustainability as the campus academic theme for two years. Since then, many departments and offices across campus have done their part to contribute. With recycling bins in every residence hall, a tray-less dining facility and a power plant that utilizes saw dust for heat, Longwood is definitely not a stranger to the sustainability game.

A current sustainability event taking place on campus this semester is RecycleMania. The campaign is a national tournament promoting waste reduction and recycling activities on college campuses across the county. The program first began in 2001 with just two schools, and since then has grown to included hundreds of institutions.

This year, Longwood will be one of the 630 colleges participating in the competition.

The competition began February 8 after a two-week trial period, and will carry on for an additional eight weeks. Every week, participating schools are required to report weekly waste and/or recycling data. The data from all schools is compiled and weekly rankings are updated to the RecycleMania website.

Kelly Martin, sustainability coordinator for Longwood, is heading up the program this year. Martin explained that Longwood uses the weight system for measuring their recyclables. The recyclables are collected out of the residence halls and other buildings on campus by the members of housekeeping. Martin then takes the numbers given to her and turns those results in on behalf of the school.

ARAMARK is a big supporter and also a co-sponsor for the competition. With the help of ARAMARK, Longwood is competing in the food waste category for the first time ever. Martin said, "We measure the amount of food waste that is composted in our composting program."

Although there seems to be no prize for the institution if they are a winning school, students are encouraged to participate just for the purpose. Martin said, "We do the program to raise awareness about sustainability." She went on to say, "It gives us the opportunity to gauge our recycling efforts against other schools, not just in the Commonwealth, but also across the country. "

Students can most help out Longwood in RecycleMania by saving their recyclable items and taking them to the appropriate containers in residence halls and academic buildings on campus. Longwood students can recycle paper, cardboard, plastics #1-7, magazines, newspaper, and aluminum.

Senior business major Sam Hardy says he'll be participating in the RecycleMania initiative and believes "recycling is important because it facilitates the upkeep of the environment. Also by recycling, we as a people will not exhaust all our natural resources."

This is Longwood's third time participating in RecycleMania and it is something the institution plans to continue participating in to continue its journey of becoming a green campus.

For updates on how Longwood's doing in the competition or just more information about RecycleMania, contact Kelly Martin or visit the campaign's website at www.recyclemania.org.