

CASE STUDY:

Cedar Lake Triathlon



EVENT PROFILE

Name:

Cedar Lake Triathlon

Location:

Cedar Lake, Chester, CT

Water Stations: 3

ReThink Volunteer: 1

YMCA Staff: 4



The Valley Shore YMCA holds the Cedar Lake Triathlon series each summer in Chester, Connecticut. Their mission is to share sportsmanship, a healthy lifestyle, achievement of personal goals and develop a stronger racing community. There is a 500-yard swim, 10-mile bike ride, and 3-mile run. The triathlon series benefits the Valley Shore YMCA Race4Chase Youth Triathlon program to introduce young athletes to the sport of Triathlon in memory of Chase Michael Anthony Kowalski who lost his life with classmates at Sandy Hook in 2012. At each triathlon, the YMCA provided plastic bottled water and disposable cups. ReThink Disposable helped make the switch to reusable silicone water bottles and reusable cups. With purple return stations and signage, our New England Zero Waste Organizer collected the used bottles and cups for sanitization and use at the following events. ReThink Disposable helped make 3 of the 5 series zero-waste!

Changes to serviceware for less waste and more savings:

Single-use disposable paper cup	→	Durable plastic cup
Plastic bottled water	→	Reusable silicone water bottle

The Cedar Lake Triathlon eliminated all disposable items provided to racers.



ReThink Disposable branded reusable cups.



Coolers with reusable silicone water bottles.



Reusables used in one event.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- 100% savings eliminating the purchasing of all disposable cups and bottles
- Around 600 disposable items reduced during the three zero-waste events

LESSONS LEARNED

We started the first zero-waste triathlon series with 47 silicone water bottles and 249 reusable plastic cups. During that event, we lost 4 water bottles and 8 cups. ReThink Disposable ordered 100 more reusable cups in anticipation of a larger turnout for the next triathlon. During the second of the zero-waste series, we lost 7 water bottles and 10 cups. At the final triathlon, another 3 water bottles and 13 cups were not returned.

- 14 water bottles or 30% were not returned
- 31 cups or 9% were not returned

Announcements were made at the beginning of each event requesting participants return cups and bottles to the designated purple bins for reuse. No deposit was required to use the reusable items, and some loss was expected. The race was capped at 100 participants but did not include the additional number of family and friends who attended. The event was held at a public beach at Cedar Lake, therefore the water stations including the reusable silicone water bottles were accessible to anyone at the lake. Our New England Zero Waste Organizer attended all the events and surveyed the routes, ensuring no items were accidentally littered. A review was conducted of all trash and recycling bins, and no reusables were found. This report will determine that the loss of reusables was due to participants or attendees taking items with them. To encourage returns, we could consider numbering the silicone water bottles and holding a raffle. We could also offer participants the chance to purchase bottles they want to keep.

“Rethink Disposable’s innovative bottles and process seamlessly provide our triathletes with hydration on the go while eliminating the wasteful paper cups originally provided. Our participants were extremely impressed with the functionality and simplistic process, all while providing them with the peace of mind of being environmentally conscious.”

Josh MacNive
Health & Wellness Director
Valley Shore YMCA

ReThink Disposable is a program of Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund conducted in partnership with local organizations, businesses, and government agencies. Generous support is provided by a changing list of public and private funders. To learn more about the program, its partners, and funders, visit: www.rethinkdisposable.org

