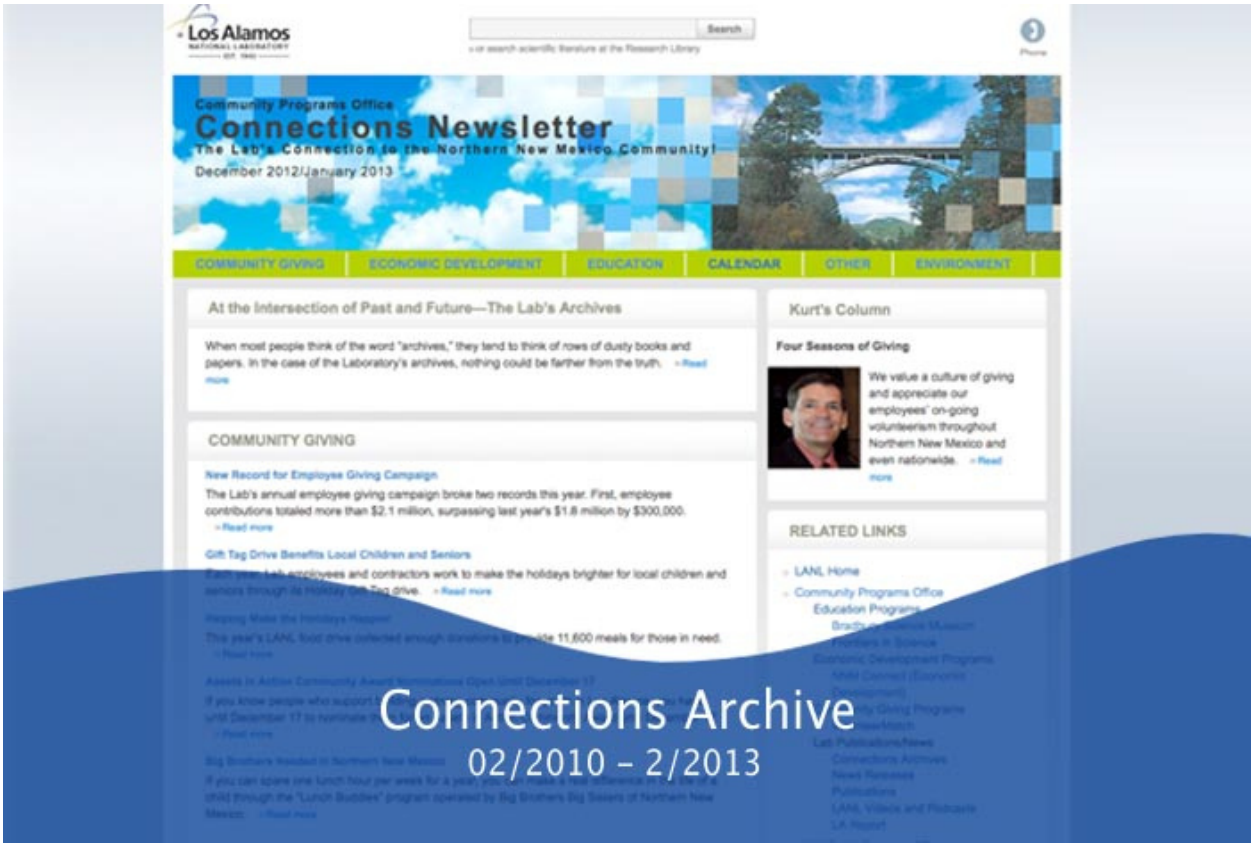
Protecting the environment into the future

February 1, 2013



Lab Employees Don’t Treat Their Trash Like Garbage

Last year, the Lab recycled 47 percent of its solid, non-hazardous waste (which translates to about 1,275 metric tons of paper, cardboard, plastic bottles, and aluminum cans) by placing it in the recycling containers that dot the Laboratory landscape. The Lab’s goal is to increase that amount by three percent, to a total of 50 percent, by 2015.

In addition, the Lab was able to recycle 93 percent of its construction and demolition waste (almost 7,000 tons of debris and scrap materials) and reused more than 5,000 of the 20,188 cubic yards of clean soil from onsite construction and demolition activities.

The Lab’s recycle rate of 47 percent compares favorably with the current national rate of 34 percent, but it continues to work to reduce the amount of waste for disposal. Beginning last year, the Lab began to recycle a variety of batteries, including nickel

cadmium, nickel metal hydride, lithium, silver oxide, mercury button cell, lead acid, and lithium ion for laptops and cell phones.

New Tool Helps Reduce Use of Hazardous Chemicals

During the course of their scientific work, Lab employees have used a wide variety of chemicals, ranging from acids to etch metals to baby oil (really), to delve into the secrets of the universe. A new tool, the “Green Chemical Alternatives Purchasing Wizard,” will begin to help Lab employees choose the most benign substances possible for their work.

Developed for, and accessed through, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the tool allows researchers to input the chemicals or processes they wish to replace and suggests safer, and often less expensive, alternatives.

Of course, some materials have such unique properties that they cannot be substituted in some applications, but this tool will help them explore alternatives where feasible.