

BYOB and refill at water stations

Fountains an effort to keep plastic bottles from waste

By Wendy Koch and Kirsti Marohn
USA TODAY

Filling stations are no longer just for gas.

In an eco-friendly push, hundreds of U.S. colleges are installing water fountains known as hydration stations so students can refill water bottles rather than buy new ones. Some campuses are even banning the sale of bottled water.

The stations are also popping up in airports, parks, office buildings — and even on tours with bands, including the Black Eyed Peas — as efforts proliferate to reduce plastic waste by promoting tap water.

Adding to this push is a network of more than 800 restaurants and cafes nationwide that have agreed to give people with reusable bottles free water refills.

New York-based TapIt, a group launched in 2009, has worked with city governments to sign up eateries in 22 states, including major cities such as New York, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Salt Lake City and Portland, Ore.

Next month, Philadelphia is slated to join, says

TapIt's William Schwartz.

"It's the right product at the right time," says Rod Magnuson of Elkay, which began selling several versions of the water stations last year. Elkay, which makes fountains, water coolers and other products, reports more than 150 colleges

and universities have installed its refilling stations. About the same number have installed Brita ones, which launched in November, says Katy Loos of Haws Corp., which licenses the Brita brand.

"They're so much easier than tipping bottles under the old water fountains," says Mike Gallagher, a sophomore at Immaculata (Pa.) College, which has 20 stations. "You can fill them all the way to the top."

What will this mean for bottled water? After a two-year dip, consumption rose 3.5% last year when it averaged 28.3 gallons per American, according to the International Bottled Water Association, an industry group.

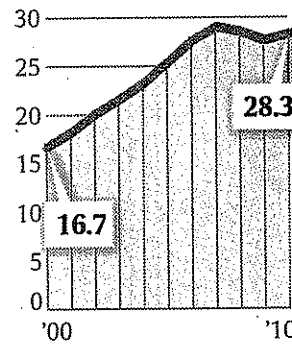
"It has a following that's strong," especially as recycling of plastic bottles gets easier, says the group's Tom Lauria. He doesn't expect hydration stations to hurt

sales: "There's probably enough room for both."

Marohn also reports for the *St. Cloud (Minn.) Times*

Riding wave of bottled water

Annual bottled water consumption per person in the USA (in gallons):



Source: Beverage Marketing Corp.

By Frank Pompa, USA TODAY

► Push to ban bottled water big on campus, 5A