

THE OKRA NEWS

OKLAHOMA RECYCLING ASSOCIATION

October 2019

Welcome to the OKRA online newsletter. Please feel free to share our newsletter with anyone who might enjoy reading it. To receive electronic notification of newsletter availability and general recycling announcements, sign-up for the OKRA listserv on our website:
www.recycleok.org/get_involved

Oklahomans Navigate the Recycling Jungle

The 2019 Oklahoma Recycling Conference, "Navigating the Recycling Jungle," was held Wednesday, September 25th in Tulsa, Oklahoma at the Tulsa Zoo, Chapman Event Lodge.

The event provided many opportunities for networking and sharing ideas on improving recycling across the state.

Ellen Bussert, Oklahoma Recycling Association (OKRA) Administrative Assistant to the Board, introduced OKRA President Sara Ivey. Sara welcomed participants to the conference, outlined the mission of OKRA and encouraged participants to use the conference to meet new people and learn new ideas about recycling. Sara introduced the OKRA Board and thanked our 2019 Conference Sponsors. See page 4 for a list of sponsors.

Market Update - Chris Bell

After a light breakfast, Chris Bell of Smurfit Kappa, North America showed a video on Smurfit Kappa and then gave a brief rundown on current recycling market conditions. Chris said that markets are challenging, as most recycling commodities were at a 10-year



low for their average prices in 2019. Chris also said that movement and service are key factors in lean markets, and that a positive packaging trend is to make more with less.

Keynote Address - Neil Seldman

Next was our Keynote Presentation, "Waste to Wealth" by Neil Seldman of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance. See page 5 for an article highlighting Neil's presentation. After the Keynote, attendees took a morning break for networking and visiting the exhibitor tables.



Recycling Success Stories

After the break, we were honored to hear not only one, but three success stories. The recycle program success stories were from areas of community, school, and business. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Republic Services, and Cox Communications shared their recent successes in the world of recycling.

Navigating the Recycling Jungle ..Success Stories

Success Story 1 - James Williams

A 2010 study by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation uncovered that 75% of their trash can be recycled. The tribe



has implemented recycling programs at the College of the Muscogee Nation and at Henryetta High School. They understand that targeting

children will spark a culture change within their community and eliminate waste from burn piles or makeshift landfills. In 2018, 249,931 pounds of waste were kept out of their landfills. Earth Day on April 22 and America Recycles Day on November 15 are two important dates for the tribe in relation to recycling. We wish James Williams, Environmental Services Director, Muscogee (Creek) Nation all the best as he and his team promote and celebrate next month during America Recycles Day and thank the tribe for their contributions in making our state and world a better place to live. See James' slides [here](#).

Success Story 2 - Crystal Bennett

Do you live in Norman, Edmond, or Midwest City? If so, give yourself a pat on the back. Crystal Bennett, Manager Municipal Services, Republic Services, happily reported that there is a 92% participation rate in the aforementioned cities. Republic Services has five successful programs that they created for schools. Touch a



Truck, Recycle Smart, Republic Reads, Recycle Art, and Video Education make up the five resources that your local school can utilize. These programs target both young children and teens. Republic Services has also realized that to make a shift in recycling, education needs to begin with children. Team members from Republic Services spent 140 hours last year reading to 11 classrooms and 308 children. Thirty minutes per week invested in the schools is making a difference!

Young children are teaching their parents about the importance of recycling. See Crystal's slides [here](#).

Success Story 3 - Patrick Ivey

Do you recycle at your job? Does your company offer recycling? If the answer is no, then Patrick Ivey with Cox Communications is someone you want to meet. Cox Communications has a program called Cox Con-

serves. In 2018 their campaign, "One Less Cup" gained major traction with their employees. So much traction that a \$100,000 financial impact was made to their bottom



line. They are not stopping there. Major goals have been established for the future of their company and the future of our world. By 2024, they want to be a zero waste company. Zero waste is a philosophy that utilizes the implementation of strategy, resources, and innovative tools in order to completely eliminate waste rather than manage it via landfill. Zero waste companies are not only beneficial for the environment but also for the economy and many communities around the world. By developing programs and policies for reducing, reusing, and recycling materials that would otherwise be destined for less desirable outcomes, Cox will join the likes of Subaru, New Belgium Brewing, Microsoft, Google, Toyota, and others. By 2044, they want to be water neutral. In essence the goal is to offset water, be good stewards of water, and reduce and reuse water. They also want to minimize their carbon footprint and be carbon neutral. Being carbon neutral is achieving and sustaining a state in which the net amount of carbon dioxide or other carbon compounds emitted into the atmosphere is reduced to zero because it is balanced by actions to reduce or offset emissions. See Patrick's slides [here](#).

Three cheers for these three entities who are doing their part to reduce, reuse, and recycle - Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Republic Services, and Cox Communications!

Navigating the Recycling Jungle..Tulsa Zoo

Luncheon Speaker - Ric Kotarsky

After a delicious lunch of build-your-own tacos, the audience was delighted to hear from the luncheon speaker, Ric Kotarsky from the Tulsa Zoo. When asked what animal he would like to be, Ric said a Lemur, as he used to work with the creatures and still finds them fascinating. Ric spoke on the Zoo's recycling and composting program. See Ric's slides [here](#).

Ric demonstrates what a difference one person can make, as he is solely responsible for much of the Tulsa Zoo's recycling program. In the last seven years, the program has increased from recycling only three items to 19 items. In recent years the Zoo has won numerous accolades and awards for their green practices, including the 2016 and 2018 Henry Bellmon Awards for Sustainability and the 2018 Recycles Day Award from the Tulsa M.e.t.

The Tulsa Zoo hopes to develop sustainable operations by decreasing water usage by conservation and efficiency measures; decreasing greenhouse gas and air pollution by energy conservation/efficiency measures; increasing the amount of environmentally responsible products and materials used at the Zoo; and diverting the maximum amount of waste from landfills through source reduction, reuse, composting, recycling, and waste to energy programs.

The Zoo has an Earth Friendly Committee made up of employees that help identify ideas for opportunities and green practices.



Green Roof on the Rhino Barn at the Tulsa Zoo

The Zoo grows its own herbs and vegetables. It composts food waste, and has two green roofs and two large rain gardens. In June 2017, the Zoo eliminated single use plastic bags in the gift shop. They also changed their purchasing program, and reduced waste by not purchasing toys in plastic packaging.



include paper, fluorescent light bulbs (standard and compact), alkaline batteries, glass, tires, bubble wrap,

packing peanuts, inflatable packaging, metals, wooden pallets, rechargeable and lead batteries, plastic bags, markers, E-waste, oil (from fleet and train), and cooking oil. Much of the recycling for these items is performed solely by Ric, who canvassed local businesses to find places that would reuse the packing peanuts, bubble wrap, and other items. He loads up a truck with those items and delivers them to the places that will take them. A benefit for Zoo employees is that they are able to bring 17 of the 19 items from their homes to be recycled at the Zoo.

OKRA congratulates Ric for the positive changes made to the Tulsa Zoo's recycling program! The Zoo is making steady strides toward green practices and sustainability.



Conference Attendees Visit Vendors in Exhibit Area

Expert Roundtables

The final conference session of the day featured nine expert roundtable discussions. Participants selected three topics to attend, and moved between tables during a musical chairs type interlude. The discussion topics and table facilitators were:

1) How to Talk with Legislators (*Jeanie McDaniel, ret. Oklahoma state legislator*); 2) Tire Recycling & Clean-



How to Talk with Legislators Round Table



Tire Recycling Round Table

ups (*Ferrella March, ODEQ*); 3) Food Waste Hauling (*Natalie Mallory, Full Sun Composting*); 4) Recycled Paper Products (*Chris Bell, Smurfit Kappa North America*); 5) Glass Recycling (*Katie Brown, Ardagh Group*); 6) Branding Your Recycling (*Maureen Turner, City of Tulsa*); 7) Product Stewardship Programs (*Garmon Smith, Ada Recycling Coalition*); 8) Single-Stream Challenges (*Greta Calvery, Waste Management, Inc.*); and 9) Rural Opportunities (*Keima Kamara, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service*). Most discussions were quite lively and informative, as conference participants were quick to both ask questions of the subject matter experts and to share their own experiences.



Conference Wrap-up and Prize Drawings

Sara Ivey and Ellen Bussert thanked everyone for attending the 2019 conference and drew tickets for door prizes. Prizes included a home composter and gift cards to several local merchants.

Post Conference Tours

After the conference, attendees were encouraged to participate in one of two offered tours. Ric Kotarsky, Tulsa Zoo, led a group through the Zoo looking at their composting and recycling operations while Scott Van Loo, City of Tulsa, hosted a group at the City of Tulsa Mulch Site. Both tours were very well received, even though the unusu-

ally hot September weather made it a bit uncomfortable being outside.

All in all, the 2019 Oklahoma Recycling Conference was a great event, with lots of opportunities for networking and sharing recycling stories and experiences. And the best part is... we plan to it again in 2020!



Ric Kotarsky shows the group a rain garden at the Tulsa Zoo

OKRA thanks our awesome 2019 Conference Sponsors!

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Keep Oklahoma Beautiful

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Pinpoint Wire Technologies

Republic Services

Solid Waste Association of North America

We couldn't have done it without you!

Waste to Wealth - Keynote Address

The 11th Annual Oklahoma Recycling Association conference was held at the oh so nice Tulsa Zoo. I had not been in ten years due to living in the Oklahoma City area and was amazed of the beauty of the exhibits, grounds, and animals. I highly recommend spending a morning at the Tulsa Zoo. The keynote speaker of the Navigating the Recycling Jungle Conference was a lion that once lived adjacent to the Washington D.C. Zoo. His lion cubs saw giraffes every day on their way to school. Okay, well the actual speaker was the esteemed and informative grassroots organizer, Neil Seldman from the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR). But, when asked by Ellen Bussert, emcee and OKRA employee, what animal he would want to be his response was a lion. Seldman is the co-founder and the Director of the Waste to Wealth Program.

Seldman told the group of 100+ recycling, composting, and overall green attendees many noteworthy things. He fell in love with garbage 45 years ago so he has a wealth of knowledge to share on all things recycling. His keynote presentation, "Waste to Wealth," gave a broad history of the last 50 years of recycling.

Two points hit on during his morning presentation were one, we need to compost more and two, we need to get our social service agencies involved. Collaboration is key.

Composting can be done in your backyard, in a community shared space, or even at the corporate level. Seldman stated that 50% of waste disappears and the Nature Deficit Disorder can be minimized all from composting. Composting is good for the soil and your soul! From healthy soils, to good local jobs, composting can have such an impact! We ask you to think like Neil Seldman, What Would Seldman Do (WWSD)... so think twice before you throw away your compostable food scraps. Visual graphics of the impact of composting can be downloaded [here](#).



St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County, Oregon, is on a mission to change the lives of individuals, families, communities, and overall culture. In 2018 the nonprofit reported 44.1 pounds of materials were diverted from landfills by St. Vincent de Paul enterprises including 4.7 million books and 1 million pounds of electronic waste. These numbers are impressive and encouraging!

The opportunities in Oklahoma are immense according to Seldman. He is happy to see that we have local players in the recycling industry and that we are not solely relying on China. Seldman is passionate and positive and says we have a reason to be hopeful despite the drastic import restrictions on recycled materials that China recently imposed. This is an important opportunity for American cities to improve their recycling operations. Here is an excerpt from Governing Magazine: "*Cities can and should do much more to weather this storm and become resilient against future challenges than simply telling Americans that they don't know how to recycle. Recycling is not crashing, and it is not disappearing. Even as cities' recycling operations become more costly, on a per-ton basis recycling and composting can be one-third cheaper than disposal via landfill or incinerator.*"

Happy Recycling!

Guest Writer, Nicole Glenn
Keep Jones Beautiful



KOB to host 29th Annual Environmental Excellence Celebration

Oklahoma residents with a passion for their communities will attend Keep Oklahoma Beautiful's 29th Annual Environmental Excellence Celebration on Friday, November 22nd at the **National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum**.

Keep Oklahoma Beautiful, a statewide nonprofit, recognizes Oklahomans doing their part to help preserve the beauty and sustainability of this state. This year, over 37 individuals, communities, businesses, municipalities, state agencies and more from across the state will be recognized for their work in the past year.

Each year, KOB hosts the Environmental Excellence Celebration, where the public nominates groups and individuals for their efforts to benefit Oklahoma's environment. The nominations are pre-

sented to a panel of guest judges from the community, who determine finalists in various different categories.

"Here at Keep Oklahoma Beautiful we are about communities, not profit," said Jeanette Nance, Executive Director of Keep Oklahoma Beautiful. "When disconnected people come together as a community with a cause, we change the face of Oklahoma. I absolutely love this event where we can honor so many deserving individuals and groups for the good they do all across our state."

Finalists for the Environmental Excellence Competition showed exceptional work in the following areas: education, conservation, beautification, sustainability practices, nonprofit efforts, youth leadership, litter prevention, and more.

Environmental Law Enforcement Training Available in Oklahoma City

The Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service is joining forces with the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality to provide a **FREE** training on environmental law enforcement. The training will take place on Friday, January 24, 2020 at the Oklahoma County Extension office (N.E 63rd Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73111). Participants will gain expertise in environmental crimes investigations involving solid and hazardous waste, air and water pollution, open burning, and agency jurisdictional issues. Additionally, information about identifying resources for improving local enforcement programs and networking with others involved in environmental enforcement will be provided. Anyone interested in environmental law or who has a responsibility for preventing illegal dumping in their county is encouraged to attend. This includes law

enforcement officers, tribal environmental representatives, county commissioners, city officials, and local citizens with an interest in sustainability. More information about the training and registration can be found [here](#), or contact Keima Kamara at keima.kamara@okstate.edu or (405)744-9827.



Highlight your 2019 ARD events in the OKRA News!

Send photos and articles to OKRA newsletter editor (trudi.logan@us.af.mil) and we will try to include them in an upcoming edition of the OKRA News!

It's easy to get connected with OKRA!
Like us on Facebook at
www.facebook.com/RecycleOK.org/



Oklahoma Cox Conserves Team Holds Zero Waste Event



At Cox, driving positive environmental change — inside our company and within the communities we serve — is one of the most important things we do. The Oklahoma Cox Conserves team recently held the largest Zero Waste event for the company at a picnic of over 500 employees. The team worked with suppliers to ensure that they provided recyclable drinks, compostable plates and utensils and did not create unnecessary waste. Cox partnered with Fertile Grounds to educate employees on what was compost, recycling, and potentially waste. It was the first time that an event with over 500 employees generated less than a half bag of trash.

How Public Policy Decisions Impact Sustainability

A recent [local news story](#) quoted the city of Oklahoma City as saying our current landfills only had 20-30 years left. Given that Oklahoma City will still be here and likely be larger in 20-30 years, this doesn't sound particularly sustainable. Combine this with [research from the Environmental Research & Education Foundation](#) that says we have among the lowest trash tipping fees in the country and we can ask, who really pays for all this? The short answer is we all do. Few folks want a new landfill in their back yard and communities everywhere are trying to find more practical, sustainable options than throwing everything in the trash. Let's consider our options through the lenses of human behavior and economics.

Sustainability is sometimes a loaded term but at its core it is thinking about our future. Whether it is a warming planet or a new landfill, we can take actions today that allow us to have a better future. The cost of waste management is real and has far

reaching implications but a few tweaks to public policy can avert obvious trouble down the road.

Right now, even if people want to be more sustainable, the economics are in favor of doing the opposite. Low tipping fees and lack of easy access to alternatives like recycling or composting often make trash the most likely reaction to waste needs. Nearly all organizations have some concern about costs and ease. Without some cost pressure (or improved ease) organizations will continue to do whatever is cheapest and easiest. It is human nature.

The costs differences, especially at scale, between trash, recycling or even composting can be fairly comparable. Where differences arise is education (do we know how to do this), ease (are we already doing it) and local economics (costs). Low tipping fees encourage the status quo even though long term, it may be far more costly to build new landfills and certainly has ecological downsides.

By bringing tipping fees more in line with the actual costs, you start to make alternatives more competitive and you create an incentive to change behavior for communities to educate themselves about alternatives. Combine this with innovative and bold education campaigns and you can really get the ball rolling to a more sustainable future.

Instead of waiting 20-30 years to address a fixable problem, we can encourage civic leaders to start looking at the costs now and encouraging the adoption of the alternatives that already exist. Good economics and low cost education efforts can rapidly change the status quo as it has in communities across our country.

by Nick Singer

Nick works in sales for Fertile Ground. He has a degrees in Economics and Mathematics from Penn State and has worked for and consulted with many political organizations and campaigns around Oklahoma. Opinions are his own.



Tips for Reducing, Reusing and Recycling this Holiday Season

1. **Rethink your gift wrapping.** Cut down on paper waste by wrapping your gifts in reusable cloth wrap, gift bags, or newspaper. Remember to reuse or recycle tissue paper and other holiday paper when you are finished with them.
2. **Ditch the disposables.** Use reusable dishware, cutlery, cups and napkins at your holiday party rather than single use items such as styrofoam, plastic and paper.
3. **Speaking of holiday parties,** place a recycle bin next to your trash can so your guests can recycle their bottles and aluminum cans.
4. **When doing your holiday shopping,** remember to bring your own bags. They will hold more stuff and help hide those special items while you get them in the house.
5. **Curb your food waste over the holidays by being realistic about how much food you will need and sending leftovers home with guests. You can also reduce your impact by composting food scraps as you prepare your holiday meals.**



I ♻️
America Recycles Day
NOVEMBER 15

ONEOK presents
2019 America Recycles Day Banquet
Wednesday, November 13, 2019
5:30 pm Cocktail and Turtle Hour
6:30 pm Dinner and Awards Ceremony

OKLAHOMA AQUARIUM
300 Aquarium Drive | Jenks, OK 74037

2019 Silver Sponsors:
• Central Plains Cement Company
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Friends of The Met

ONEOK
Please join us for an evening of honoring the
2019 recycling award winners.
Emcee: Laura Mock, Fox 23 Meteorologist

Dinner
Signature Mixed Greens Salad
Traditional Chicken Cordon Bleu
House Smoked Brisket
Oven Roasted Root Vegetables
Roasted Potatoes

**Cash Bar-Full Service
Door Prizes**

\$100 per person - Two for \$180
Payable to Friends of the M.e.t. Inc.
RSVP no later than November 1, 2019 to (918)584-0584, or RSVP@metrecycle.com
Limited tickets available.

RSVP by Friday, November 1st!

AMERICA RECYCLES DAY

Each year on November 15, millions of people across the United States take part in America Recycles Day, a day that was created to raise awareness about recycling and the purchasing of recycled products.

HOW TO OBSERVE

Recycle, buy recycled goods and help teach others the benefits of recycling and continue to do so each day! Use #AmericaRecyclesDay to post on social media.

HISTORY

America Recycles Day was started in 1997 by the National Recycling Coalition and is declared each year by Presidential Proclamation, encouraging Americans to commit to recycling. Since 2009, this day has been a program of Keep America Beautiful. There are thousands of events that are held across the U.S. to raise awareness about the importance of recycling by offering personal pledges that can be signed, to commit to recycling and buying products made from recycled materials.

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Non-Profit Partners

Ada Recycling Coalition
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Keep Oklahoma Beautiful
Pride in McAlester
Show, Inc.
Solid Waste Institute of NE Oklahoma
The Metropolitan Environmental Trust
Tulsa Master Recyclers

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Kelly Bronnenburg	Amanda Marcott-Thotunkal
Ellen Bussert	Michael Patton
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