

THE OKRA OKLAHOMA RECYCLING ASSOCIATION NEWS

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



OKLAHOMA MEDICAL SHARPS COLLECTION PROGRAM LAUNCHES IN MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

By: PSI Director of Marketing and Communications, Jessica L. Atkinson

Community members can now dispose of containerized used medical sharps safely and for free, no questions asked, at sites in Stillwater, Pawnee, Tahlequah, and Tulsa. This six-month pilot program was developed and implemented by the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) and the Oklahoma Meds and Sharps Disposal Committee (OMSDC), with grant support from the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The project aims to protect public health and the environment by increasing infrastructure for safe medical sharps collection and disposal.

"In addition to the public health and environmental risks, medical sharps that are thrown in the trash can pose a safety hazard to sanitation workers," said Patrick Riley, environmental programs manager for solid waste and sustainability at DEQ. "We know that safe collection sites are needed, and this program will demonstrate exactly how they can be operated."



Safe sharps disposal is important for protecting our families, communities, sanitation and service workers, and the environment. When placed in the trash (even in plastic containers), flushed, littered, or stored at home, sharps pose severe health and safety risks. And there are a lot of sharps out there: An estimated 108,000 Oklahoma residents use medical sharps at home to manage conditions like diabetes, generating between 20 and 50 million needles per year. Thousands of Oklahomans use syringes to inject controlled substances as well. But most people have limited convenient, accessible options to safely dispose of used needles.
(cont. on page 2)

The program runs now through mid-May 2022. For more details and site location, visit bit.ly/OKsharpspilot. Refer to PSI's how-to guide *Building a Municipal Program from Home-Generated Medical Sharps* for information about establishing a medical sharps collection program in your city or town.

By: Keep McAlester Beautiful

Jason Lilley, from Choctaw Recycling, joined us in McAlester for ARD. All of McAlester's plastic goes to Choctaw Recycling, so Jason was able to tell us the plastics are sold to a company in Texas. Conversation that began that day in November led to the City of McAlester okaying the purchase of a plastics baler that will improve our volume of plastics per shipment to Durant. The baler will pay for itself in fuel expense easily before 2022 is ended.

McAlester Recycling is expecting more good news to come, hopefully in this next newsletter. Be watching for further improvements in McAlester!



If you are interested in stepping up your membership and need more information, please take a look at the membership benefits chart also on the OKRA website. For more information about membership, contact Ellen Bussert at: okra.secretary@gmail.com



KEEP OKLAHOMA BEAUTIFUL ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE CELEBRATIONS HONORS ONE OF OKRA'S OWN, ROBERT PICKENS

By: Keep Oklahoma Beautiful

The Keep Oklahoma Beautiful Lifetime Achievement Award is presented to a person for a body of work spanning at least 25 years which has shown outstanding achievements in leadership, environmental stewardship and efforts that have produced obvious improvements, enhancements and/or preservation of Oklahoma's environment.

The 2021 KOB Lifetime Achievement award was given to Robert Pickens - American Waste Control, Tulsa. Robert is a member of the Oklahoma Recycling Association (OKRA) and has been involved with recycling for over 30 years. He served on the OKRA Board of directors for 15 years. While serving as OKRA Treasurer, Robert was instrumental in getting OKRA their 510 (C) 3 status. He also chair the Bylaws Committee and was active on the membership committee. Robert currently serves on the board of the Indian Nations Chapter of the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA.)

Colleagues in the recycling industry consider Pickens to be the guru when it comes to recycling. Robert, on his own time holds discussions regarding recycling practices at KOB Workshops and Forums, he has also given an informative presentation at the KOB board meeting. He does presentations at trade conferences, like OKRA and SWANA. He worked with the City of Tulsa on their recycling program and informational materials to assist the Tulsa residents in proper recycling, thus helping to curb the City of Tulsa's recycling contamination. Robert helps out communities and anyone that needs assistance or education about recycling.



Robert Pickens

GET INVOLVED WITH OKRA IN 2022 JOIN A WORK GROUP OR COMMITTEE

Would you like improved accessibility to recycling in Oklahoma? Would you like to help strengthen Oklahoma's recycling network?

If so, please consider joining one of OKRA's work groups or committees in 2022. Your term of commitment is one year, with the option to continue. Select the work group you wish to join when you renew your membership in 2022 or contact Ellen Bussert at okra.secretary@gmail.com.

Committees

Conference Planning Committee (Chair: Ellen Bussert) This committee handles the program, logistics and fundraising for the annual Oklahoma Recycling Association Conference.

Communications Committee (Chair: Jon Barton) This committee updates OKRA website content, manages and posts updates to the listserv, maintains engagement via social media.

Membership Committee (Chair: Ellen Bussert): This committee facilitates membership renewals, solicits new members, updates the membership structure and brochure, and recognizes OKRA members.

Work Groups

Advocacy Work Group (Chair: Michael Barton) The Advocacy Work Group works to make OKRA better known among Oklahoma legislators and decision makers. The ultimate goal is to make OKRA the "go to" organization for recycling, waste reduction and resource recovery issues in our state.

Education and Outreach Work Group (Chair: Sara Ivy) The Education Work Group organizes Lunch and Learn workshops to provide information on recycling topics and issues.

Glass Work Group (Chair: Chris Knight) The Glass Work Group is working on developing initiatives to develop programs for the communities in Oklahoma to reduce the amount of glass entering the landfills in Oklahoma. (cont. on page 3).

Composting (Chair: Natalie Mallory): OKRA promotes composting as a resource recovery strategy and relays updates from the Oklahoma Compost and Sustainability Association, U.S. Composting Council, Biocycle and other compost organizations.

Materials Exchange (Chair: Zach Benedict): OKRA promotes the online RENEW Materials Exchange, a free matching service for businesses and industries that want to find takers for the by-products they generate or acquire the by-products of other businesses. This work group looks for other opportunities to facilitate and promote materials exchange programs.

Product Stewardship (Chair: Amanda Scofield): OKRA collaborates with the national Product Stewardship Institute to solve waste management problems by encouraging product design changes that lead to sustainable end-of-life management.

For more information on OKRA's Committee go to www.recycleok.org - "Get Involved"

THE M.E.T RECOGNIZES OKLAHOMA RECYCLING HEROS

By: The M.e.t

As the leading recycling resource for Tulsa and surrounding communities, the Metropolitan Environmental Trust (The M.e.t.) annually recognizes outstanding companies who make a significant impact in recycling. This year three awards were presented: 2021 Environmental Stewardship Award, the 2021 Green Project of the Year Award, and the 2021 Green Non-Profit Award. Each company that received an award went above and beyond to make taking care of the Earth a priority for them. This year's winners are: ONEOK, Cox Media Group, and Humble Son's Bike Company.

2021 GREEN PROJECT OF THE YEAR AWARD: COX MEDIA GROUP

Cox Media Group, working with The M.e.t., hosted an 8-hour event that collected items people do not recycle in their regular bins. The title of this event was the "2021 Green Event Big Spring Clean". The event took in various types of items such as: tires, batteries, plastic bags, ammunition, pharmaceuticals, cardboard, and electronic waste. On top of this collection, Cox Media Group also offered the service of paper shredding for those who were at their location. In hosting this event, Cox Media Group allowed many household items to find a disposal method that was environmentally friendly. The "Big Spring Clean" provided people with the opportunity to keep items out of their trash and the city's landfill. Instead, those materials are being reused in new products. In recognition of their support of sustainability in Tulsa and the surrounding area, The M.e.t. is pleased to present the 2021 Green Project of the Year Award to the Cox Media Group.

(cont. on page 5)

DATES FOR 2022 OKRA BOARD MEETINGS

Third Friday of the month Meeting from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

January 21

March 11

May 20

July 15

September 16

Nov 18



2021 GREEN NON-PROFIT AWARD

This year's 2021 Green Non-Profit Award goes to Humble Son's Bike Company and Bike Club! This non-profit works with Tulsa Public Schools to engage third grade students in bike activities. Amidst these programs, Humble Son's Bike Company made sure to recycle their corrugated cardboard that their bikes came in. This company partnered with the M.e.t. to gain access to resources that enabled them to make recycling a possibility with their work. This company's recycling made a huge impact when it came to diminishing their waste. In 2021 alone, Humble Son's Bike Company gave away 265 bikes. As a result, this company managed to prevent at least 265 recyclable items from ending up in landfills. This initiative helped make the Earth just a little cleaner and because of this, Humble Son's Bike Company has been awarded the 2021 Green Non-Profit Award.



THE M.E.T. HONORS OKLAHOMA'S TOP RECYCLERS ON AMERICA RECYCLES DAY

In addition to providing these awards, the M.e.t. also participated in America Recycles Day. America Recycles Day is a national holiday dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the important environment and economic benefits of recycling in the United States. According to the EPA, 681,000 jobs and nearly \$40 billion in wages come from the recycling and reuse industry in the United States. The M.e.t. celebrated America Recycles Day by honoring Oklahoma's Top Recyclers. These individuals and organizations that have been key players in progressing recycling efforts in Northeastern Oklahoma during this past year.

2021 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AWARD: ONEOK

When funding for the M.e.t.'s downtown Tulsa Recycling Depot was eliminated by the Tulsa Authority for the Recovery of Energy (TARE), ONEOK quickly stepped forward to provide the necessary financial resources for the continued operation of the depot.

By supporting the downtown depot, ONEOK has directly impacted residents of downtown Tulsa by giving them the option of continuing to recycle. ONEOK's support had allowed citizens to recycle over 200,000 pounds of materials in the first six months of the current fiscal year at the downtown M.e.t. Recycling Depot. Their support has also saved the jobs of a dozen adults with developmental disabilities.

In recognition of their support of sustainability in Tulsa and the surrounding area, The M.e.t. is pleased to present the 2021 Environmental Stewardship Award to ONEOK.



In the Picture: M.e.t. Chair Scott Eudey presents Cindy Spitler of ONEOK with the 2021 Environmental Stewardship Award.

REGISTER FOR THE 2022 GREAT AMERICAN CLEANUP

Keep Oklahoma Beautiful is taking part in the nation's largest annual cleanup. They are encouraging you to make a visible difference where you live by registering for the 2022 Great American Cleanup - Oklahoma. Each registration will be given FREE gloves, vests, and trash bags to complete their cleanup. Participating groups include scout troops, civic organizations, schools, families, businesses, municipalities - **anyone can participate!**

<https://www.keepoklahomabeautiful.com/what-we-do/great-american-cleanup.html>



OKC BEAUTIFUL CELEBRATES AMERICA RECYCLES DAY

By: Natalie Evans, OKC Beautiful, Program and Marketing Director

Why only celebrate America Recycles Day on one day, when we could celebrate all month (or all year) long?! This was the idea that kicked off a recycling information series on OKC Beautiful's social media, with a fact or tip about recycling posted every day in November.

OKC Beautiful is an environmental education and beautification organization that has served Oklahoma City for more than 50 years. Our organization has been a driver in recycling availability for residents for decades, and even in 1982, launched a computer paper and paper recycling program that provided drop-off locations for paper for more than a decade. We served as an advocate for curbside recycling, which launched in Oklahoma City in 1994. For decades, OKC Beautiful has been a proponent and education resource for residents and industries regarding recycling and other waste reduction practices.

While OKC Beautiful annually recognizes and celebrates America Recycles Day, this year, we decided to share information about recycling all month long. Facts and tips ranged from bigger-picture numbers about recycling, to individual recycling information specific to Oklahoma City residents. Examples of posts included a discussion of what a circular product and economy are, details about what plastics are accepted by the Oklahoma City curbside program, a description of each resin identification code, and why you should put the lid back on your bottle before recycling.

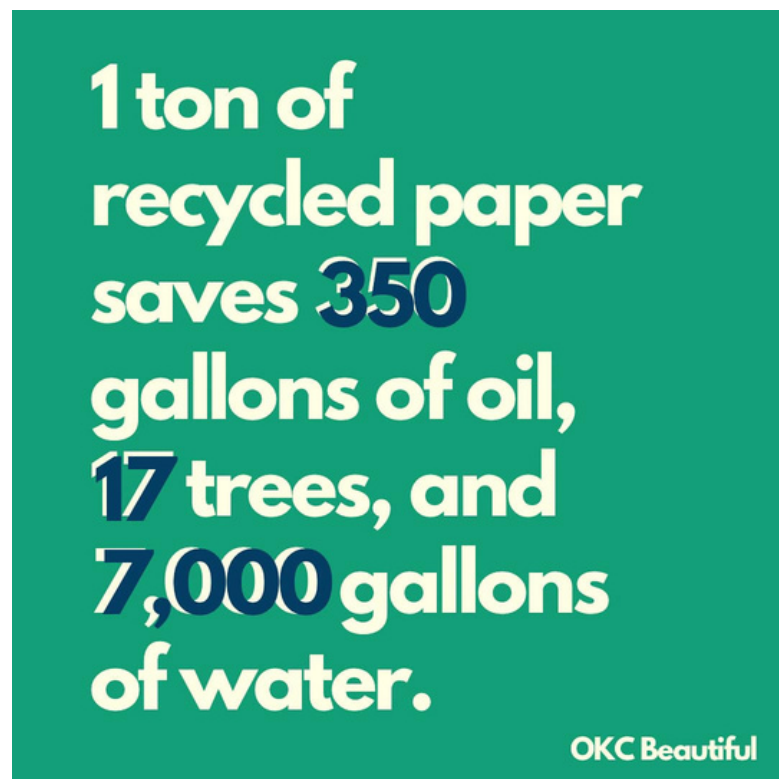
30 days, 30 facts.

Not only did this share information consistently, but it also opened up opportunities for questions and discussions regarding recycling. Through these posts and subsequent conversations, we were able to clear up some misunderstandings of whether or not lids can be recycled, whether or not the City of Oklahoma City still accepts glass recycling, and share some facts about the amount of waste we produce and how much of it is recycled.

One resident responded to a post and said, "I've enjoyed all the recycling tips, so informative!!!! Thank you!!!"

Another follower commented and said, "I normally know all of these tips and tricks. I have learned something twice this week. Thanks for the info."

This was also a great opportunity for me as a team member of OKC Beautiful to dive deeper into recycling information and grow in my knowledge. Fortunately, we had tons of great resources to learn from, such as the Environmental Protection Agency, City of Oklahoma City, and of course, the Oklahoma Recycling Association.



AMERICA RECYCLES DAY PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF RECYCLING AND ADVOCATE FOR ITS PRACTICE. WE LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUING TO SHARE ABOUT AND ADVOCATE FOR RECYCLING IN OKLAHOMA CITY!

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE ALL THE RECYCLING INFORMATION SHARED, YOU CAN CHECK OUT OKC BEAUTIFUL ON SOCIAL MEDIA AT INSTAGRAM, TWITTER, OR FACEBOOK AT @OKCBEAUTIFUL.

COMPOSTING, SO EASY EVEN KIDS CAN DO IT!

**By: Kaitlin Bacon, Myriad Gardens,
Children's Garden Manager**

According to the EPA, yard waste and food scraps make up more than 30% of what we throw away. Grass clippings and old plant waste is heavy to drag to the curb, and food scraps make our trash cans stinky. So what can we do differently? We can compost them and turn these scraps into nutrient-rich food for our gardens and yards!

While you don't need a large space to compost, sometimes it can be difficult for people in urban areas to consistently recycle these organic leftovers. In the children's garden at the Myriad Botanical Gardens, we provide a compost bin for the gardens and the surrounding community, and even better...we'll do all the work for you!

With colorful and informational signage, we promote this unique sect of recycling to families each time they visit. We provide tools to allow the kids to get into the compost bin and turn it, and we take in scraps from guests to add to our bins and invite them to take compost to use in their own gardens whenever it's ready. From newspapers to old leaves, grass clippings to coffee grounds, banana peels to remnants of chopped up vegetables, we happily add it all to the pile. Each scrap in is a scrap out of the landfills!



National Recycling Strategy

EPA'S NATIONAL RECYCLING STRATEGY

EPA is developing a series of strategies to build a circular economy for all. The first part of this series is the National Recycling Strategy, which identifies actions to address challenges facing the U.S. municipal solid waste recycling system.

EPA is seeking partners to implement these actions to create a stronger, more resilient, and more cost-effective domestic recycling system. The strategy is aligned with and support implementation of the National Recycling Goal to increase the recycling rate to 50 percent by 2030. The National Recycling Strategy is organized by five strategic objectives to create a more resilient and cost-effective national recycling system:

- A. Improve Markets for Recycling Commodities.
- B. Increase Collection and Improve Materials Management Infrastructure
- C. Reduce Contamination in the Recycled Materials Stream.
- D. Enhance Policies to Support Recycling.
- E. Standardize Measurement and Increase Data Collection.

Visit their website for more information:

<https://www.epa.gov/recyclingstrategy>



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The Oklahoma Recycling Association is holding its annual membership drive from January 1 – February 28, 2022. The OKRA website will be updated to reflect 2022 membership in March. In April, 2022 OKRA will publish the names of members in good standing in that month's edition of the news- letter.

The publication of the OKRA Membership Directory (for members only) will also be in April. Membership in OKRA is open throughout the year, but only those who renew during the membership drive will be featured in the publications. Renewing your membership is easy.

Fill out the membership form on the OKRA website. If you are interesting in stepping up in your membership and need more information, please take a look at the membership benefits chart also on the OKRA website. For more information about membership, contact Ellen Bussert at **okra.secretary@gmail.com**

Join Today!

INTO THE GREEN BIN; BUSCH SYSTEMS WEBINAR

With landfilled food waste increasingly seen as a significant source of methane emissions, and states like California and Massachusetts beginning to mandate diversion programs, organizations across the US and Canada are moving compost collections to the top of their priority list. Along the way, however, sustainability managers from colleges and universities, businesses, government agencies, K-12, and other industry sectors are confronting familiar and novel challenges. What steps can be taken to increase participation and avoid contamination? How does one avoid odors and pests, not to mention inflated perceptions about them.

How do you integrate organics recovery with existing food service operations and waste collections? This webinar will feature a panel of veteran program managers from a range of different institutions sharing the lessons they've learned through case study presentations and an extended panel discussion.



https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_JZOcdERRTgSjHbczwEuuOQ