

# THE OKRA OKLAHOMA RECYCLING ASSOCIATION NEWS

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I ♻️  
**AMERICA**  
RECYCLES DAY®

KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL®

The Keep America Beautiful, America Recycles Day is the only nationally-recognized day dedicated to promoting and celebrating recycling in the United States. Held on **November 15**, America Recycles Day educates and encourages individuals on how to be more mindful of what they consume, where and how to properly recycle, and how to recycle more and recycle right in everyday life.

In 2022, ARD is focusing on the economic impacts of recycling, the jobs created, reduced manufacturing costs due to the reuse of limited resources, and savings arising from not having to source new raw materials.(cont)

# AMERICA RECYCLES DAY

The day focuses on individual action, and highlights the actions we can all take to collectively address the challenges facing our nation's recycling system.

Through ARD, Keep America Beautiful and its partners inspire communities and individuals to recognize the economic, environmental, and social benefits of recycling.

Keep America Beautiful urges people to pledge to reduce, reuse, repurpose and recycle in every aspect of their life.

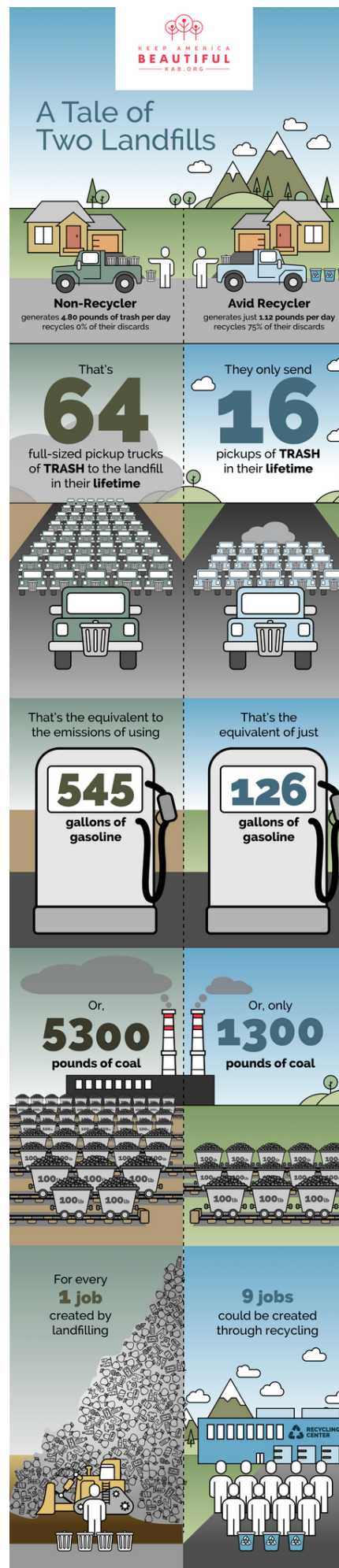
The #BeRecycled pledge is a promise to actively choose to live a recycled lifestyle by:

- Recycling at home, work, school and on the go
- Buying products made with recycled content
- Educating and encouraging friends, family, and neighbors to take the #BeRecycled pledge

It all starts with having less things. Before you shop, think about whether you really need that item and ask consider purchasing items that are packaged in recyclable material or little packaging. If you do need the item, then you can determine if it is a "green" product. Is it eco-friendly, has it passed standards for energy savings and is it something that is built to last?



"ONE DAY TO EDUCATE,  
ONE DAY TO MOTIVATE,  
ONE DAY TO MAKE RECYCLING  
BIGGER & BETTER"



# CITY OF MIDWEST CITY REPUBLIC SERVICE AUDIT FOR SUPER RECYCLER PROGRAM



Republic Services conducted an audit with the City of Midwest City for their Super Recycler Program. A surprise waste audit is done of the recycling bins. Tags are put on the recycling bins if there is a problem with what is in the container or suggestions for improvement (like tear down the cardboard boxes.) If it is perfect, they are designated as a Super Recycler. Republic Services will give them \$25.00.

This competition happens during the first 2 weeks of October. This exercise helps the City of Midwest City clean up its recycling program.



Picture left to right; Sara Ivey, Oklahoma Green Schools Program Executive Director & Crystal Bennett, Municipal Manager Republic Services



OKRA Board Member Paul Streets, Midwest City City Public Works Director, and City Councilman Rick Favors



Pictured left to right Jerry Summers, MWC Solid Waste Supervisor, Carrie Evenson, MWC Assistant Public Works Director, Crystal Bennett

# OKRA RECYCLING CONFERENCE 2022 RECAP

## “PRACTICALLY EVERYTHING IS RECYCLABLE” – CHUCK RALLS, OKRA’S 2022 KEYNOTE SPEAKER

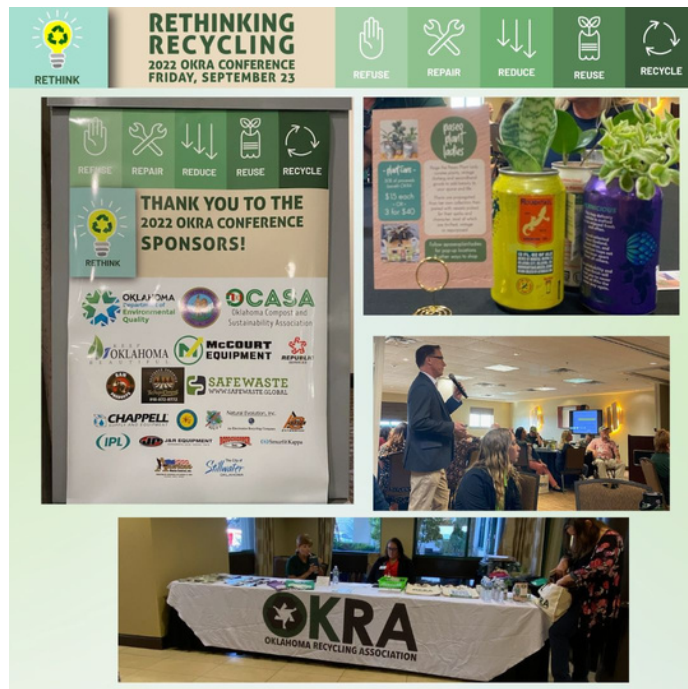
By Amanda Scofield

Chuck Ralls was a fantastic and inspirational Keynote speaker at the 2022 OKRA Conference. As City Manager of Comanche, Chuck spoke to an engaged audience on his experience with recycling, composting, and other means of diversion and self-sufficiency as a rural community.

Ralls reminisced on when he first started as City Manager and noticed Comanche’s recycling program was not working. “It’s time to rethink how and what we recycle,” he said with a customer-service-oriented mindset. He told us the 3 steps that moved his community forward:

1. Find a recycler that works for your community. In Comanche’s case, this was Replenish, a recycling service that provides resources, tools, and collection services.
2. Find creative ways to engage with your citizens, provide proper education, and try to not over-burden existing staff. The City of Comanche received funding for a recycling trailer from the Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ) Solid Waste Management Grant Program. The city uses the trailer as a drop-off site at their community center and takes it to city events.
3. Make your program scalable and sustainable.

Now that Comanche has established recycling through Replenish, they are in the process of Step 3. They plan to phase out of Replenish’s services to start their own curbside program and mini-MRF (materials recovery facility). The revenue from the mini-MRF will be reinvested back into their program through education and cleanup. Ralls continued to share other projects and programs that Comanche hosts, such as their Power to Playground program where old or damaged power lines are responsibly chipped and reused on community playgrounds; their yard waste program where yard waste is collected at the curb, chipped, and can be requested for free delivery; and their Senior Nutrition Center that is striving for zero-waste which includes a community garden that feeds up to 80 hungry community members each day, buying in bulk to reduce waste, recycling, and a new commercial composter, which was also funded through a DEQ grant. We can’t wait to see what Comanche does next!



# THE "FUN" OF FUNDING

By Patrick Riley

Patrick spoke about funding opportunities available from DEQ and EPA that support solid waste and environmental projects. Solid waste disposal fees provide revenue that DEQ uses for a number of things. \$1.25 for every ton disposed in Oklahoma is used to pay salaries of permit engineers and landfill inspectors, pay for training and education, and provide grants to units of local government, tribes, non-profits and others.

Grants are provided for:

- environmental officers who investigate and clean up illegal dumps,
- reimbursement to counties and municipalities to purchase recycling and other solid equipment,
- collection events for household hazardous waste and electronic waste,
- projects that prevent or manage food waste such as retail recovery programs, and
- professional services, like support to OKRA, Keep Oklahoma Beautiful and others.

DEQ also has a program to provide funding for projects that help develop markets for used tire material. Those interested in applying for DEQ grants are encouraged to watch this page for additional information and notification of opportunities to apply:  
<https://www.deq.ok.gov/land-protection-division/waste-management/solid-waste/funding-opportunities-for-community-based-environmental-protection-projects>. This past fiscal year DEQ supported nearly \$2 million worth of projects. This coming year there may be additional opportunities through EPA.

EPA will be making funds available through the Save Our Seas Act that aim to "support improvements to local post-consumer materials management, including municipal recycling programs; and assist local waste management authorities in making improvements to local waste management systems." Some funds are set aside for state environmental agencies, but other funding may be available to other units of government. Interested parties are encouraged to sign up to receive notices and updates at:  
<https://www.epa.gov/recyclingstrategy/forms/stay-connected>

For additional information please contact a member of DEQ's Sustainable Materials Manager Section:

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## ZERO WASTE EVENTS

By Amanda Scofield

Each year, the Oklahoma City Arts Council strives to bring the arts and community together at the Oklahoma City Festival of the Arts. The Festival has been around since the late sixties and has been a Zero Waste Event for over 10 years. Angela Cozby, the Arts Council's Executive Director, and Seth Lewis, the Festival Director, expressed the hurdles and successes they have experienced along their zero-waste journey.

As a long-standing event, Cozby and Lewis expressed difficulty in changing the mindset of festivalgoers, staff, and vendors when initially attempting to "green" the festival. To combat the resistance, they developed a 5-year plan to slowly implement their new ways and educate staff and attendees. The plan included creating a Go Green Committee in which volunteers serve as Go Green Ambassadors for proper disposal during the festival. Ambassadors sort through bins and help educate attendees when they look confused at disposal stations.

Cozby and Lewis emphasized the importance of:

- Working closely with community partners
- Finding supportive sponsors
- Using clear and abundant signage
- Casting a far and wide volunteer outreach net
- Remaining flexible (i.e., during COVID)

Cozby and Lewis recommend successful practices for those interested in hosting a zero-waste event:

- No paper flyers or giveaways when advertising prior to the event or at the event
- Requiring all vendors to sign contracts indicating they will only use compostable items
- Color-coating bins with matching bags (i.e. black for landfilling, blue for recycling, and green for composting)
- Additional sorting after initial collection and Ambassador sorting
- Involving student groups

Cozby and Lewis have set future goals to make other Arts Council events zero-waste, as well as creating a more sustainable office culture. We are thrilled that the Arts Council represents one of the largest eco-conscious events in the country!

# OKRA RECYCLING CONFERENCE GLASS INITIATIVE SESSION – CHRIS KNIGHT



By Trudi Logan

Chris Knight, Chairperson of the OKRA Glass Working Group, gave a short update on the OKRA glass initiative. Chris said the OKRA Glass Working Group was started this past year to improve glass recycling in the state. Chris reminded us of the “good old days” when kids were able to sell soda bottles back to the stores for a few cents. He said that today recycling glass has its challenges and that the majority of glass generated is still being landfilled. Providing data from 2018, Chris showed that of 12.25 million tons of glass generated, approximately 7.55 million tons was sent to landfill, and only 4.7 million tons was recycled or otherwise diverted.

He said that while glass is 100% recyclable and can be recycled endlessly, it is often difficult to recycle because of the costs (particularly the cost of transporting the glass (heavy recyclable)).

Chris said that the goals set by the OKRA Glass Working Group include;

- **Reducing the volume of glass disposed in Oklahoma landfills**
- **Providing access to glass recycling outlets**
- **Increasing opportunities for partnerships and grants for glass recycling initiatives**
- **Assisting communities with Hub & Spoke systems ( help get the glass from rural areas to the hubs)**

Chris is hopeful that by working together with communities and glass companies, the OKRA Glass Working Group will make positive impacts on glass recycling in our state.

## GLASS RECYCLING IN BARS AND RESTAURANTS – SARA NICHOLS, THE GLASS PACKAGING INSTITUTE -GPI

By Trudi Logan

Sara Nichols provided an update from the Glass Packaging Institute on the glass recycling industry and on glass recycling in bars and restaurants. She said the goal of the GPI is to see as much glass recycled as possible. She gave many benefits for glass recycling, including reduced carbon emissions, decreased landfill space, and preservation of natural resources. Sara said that glass recycling is popular with consumers and that most people really want to recycle glass. In addition, community waste diversion goals are very hard to meet without glass recycling (due to its high percentage of weight in the refuse/recycling streams).

Sara said that the glass recycling industry is quite regionalized, and that bottle deposit states have much better glass infrastructure and higher recycling rates than states without bottle deposits. She said that quality matters in glass recycling, and bottle bill glass is usually much better than MRF-produced glass (more pure glass). Glass that is recycled can be made into new glass products, fiberglass, ceramics, concrete aggregate and landfill cover. Sara said that in Oklahoma there is actually a strong market for cullet, but that it is costly to transport the glass from one state to another.

Sara said the following are objectives of the Glass Packaging Institute:

- Increase glass processing capability of MRFs (Materials Recovery Facilities)**
- Cleaner residential streams**
- Expand commercial recycling of glass**
- **Expand reach and access to processing glass recyclables**
- **Provide state-wide strategy support**

Part of the goal to expand commercial recycling of glass involves increased glass recycling at bars, restaurants, stadiums, etc. These venues typically have very low recycling rates and yet are fairly large generators of glass waste. In fact, Sara said the 18% of beverages are consumed at bars and restaurants and approximately 80% of those are glass.

Sara provided information on several glass recycling pilot programs and explained the key features of each. These included programs for bar and restaurant recycling as well as programs to collect glass from large events, stadiums, and apartment buildings. Sara stressed that partnerships are key in order for these programs to be effective.

Many of the programs were implemented using partnerships between the GPI and other organizations. She said that someone has to pay the costs, but that it could be cost-neutral or even cheaper than disposal. She said that funding (grants provided by the Glass Recycling Foundation) is often available to off-set some of the costs.

Sara said that in order to have an effective program, it is key for the staff to be on-board and properly trained on the handling/ management of recyclables, and that proper space for containers is a must. The data Sara provided from the glass pilot programs show the programs are generally highly successful with significant increases in glass recycling..

Sara encouraged the audience to check out the Glass Recycling Coalition's website for good information and sound advice on glass recycling.



# OKRA RECYCLING CONFERENCE

## ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS

By Trudi Logan

After lunch, the conference featured breakout discussions on nine specific focus areas. These discussions were held roundtable style with an expert facilitator leading each discussion, answering questions and offering advice. There were two sequential sessions of identical roundtables, so each conference participant could choose which two they wished to attend. The roundtable topics and facilitators were as follows:

- **Backyard Composting & Food Waste** - Crystal Walker, AKA “the Compost Fairy” (Oklahoma Compost and Sustainability Association (OCASA))
- **Pre-cycling** - Sara Ivey (Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality)
- **Glass Manufacturing Infrastructure** - Chris Knight (OKRA Glass Working Group Chair)
- **Rural Recycling** - Chuck Ralls (City of Comanche)
- **School Recycling Programs** - Crystal Bennett (Republic Services)
- **Talking to Your State and Local Elected Officials** - Susan Paddock (former Oklahoma State Senator, District 13)
- **Public Education and Marketing** - Alec Cooley (Busch Systems)
- **Holding Special HHW Collection Events** - Garmon Smith (Ada Recycling Coalition)
- **E-Waste** - Amanda Scofield, (Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality)

These breakout discussions were very well attended and appeared to be very popular with conference attendees. Discussions were lively and the resulting cross-flows of information ensured that participants left the discussions with increased knowledge and insight of the recycling areas that they were most interested in.



# EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES



## TRASH BASH & RECYCLING RALLY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

NOVEMBER 5, 2022

Litter Cleanup

Recycling Rally



FIND MORE INFO BY VISITING  
[WWW.RECYCLEBA.COM](http://WWW.RECYCLEBA.COM)  
OR SEND AN EMAIL TO  
[GALBANO@BROKENARROWOK.GOV](mailto:GALBANO@BROKENARROWOK.GOV)



## National Zero Waste Conference 2022

Day 1: Zero Waste Businesses  
Day 2: Zero Waste Communities

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Alejandra Warren  
Plastic Free Future



Terry McDonald  
St. Vincent de Paul Society  
of Lane County, OR



Peter Mui  
Founder, Fix-it Clinic



Donald Thomson  
CRDC Global

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## Sustainable Fashion and Craft Show

Join us to explore the endless outfits you can create with second-hand clothes rather than buying into today's "fast fashion" choices.



Also featuring upcycled creations and crafts for sustainable living!

NOVEMBER 10TH

5:30 to 7:30

Donald W. Reynolds Library  
Durant, OK

We invite you to present your creations for living a more sustainable life.

For details, go to:  
[www.durantgreenschool.com](http://www.durantgreenschool.com) or use the QR code. RSVP by October 28th to reserve your spot.



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