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April 2017 Newsletter



NEBRASKA RECYCLING COUNCIL

Back to the Future

It is with great pleasure and equal humility that I write the introduction to the Nebraska Recycling Council's very first newsletter. Not only will this union of two fine organizations be greater than the sum of their parts moving forward, but also in reaching back to their roots. Back in the day (when Neil Young was singing, "Mother Nature on the run in the 1970s..."), there was a deep yearning to establish recycling in Nebraska. Passionate, hard-working volunteers pooled their best organizing skills to establish the Nebraska State Recycling Association in 1979-80.



I found this old photo in NSRA files from about 1983. No one is exactly sure what the document they are holding is, but Dale Gubbels, NSRA's first executive director, thinks it might have been a proclamation from Governor Bob Kerrey about recycling. From left to right are NSRA's original board members, Steve Burdic executive director of the Small Farms Action Group; Dorthea Beck, president of Seward's Izaak Walton League; Bob Cole, a farmer who was making floor mats from old tires; Carolyn Geiser, board chair and "spark plug" for starting the Holdrege Recycling Center; Dale Gubbels, founder and president of Firstar Fiber in Omaha; and Jerry Pearson, a composting advocate from Omaha. NSRA was organized to support the nascent recycling industry in Nebraska, starting with these and numerous other people, a truly grassroots, volunteer-driven effort.

Similarly, when WasteCap began as INFORM (Industrialized Nebraskans For Organized Recycling Management) in the late 1980s, it was also a grassroots effort. Volunteers from a few businesses formed a cooperative to improve recycling services in Lincoln, and their actions brought more recycling companies and better service into the City. This volunteer group learned how to conduct business waste assessments and perform them for one another.

What does knowing all this history do for us? I think it tells us that collaboration, partnership, shared investment, and networking was the key then, as it is now. It shows us a path to re-energize recycling in Nebraska. To borrow some ideas from Hildy Gottlieb of Creating the Future organization, we need to change our way of thinking to get the results we want, and the way we change our way of thinking is by asking different questions. She calls this catalytic thinking, and it is rooted in bringing out the best in people.

For example, instead of asking "What is the problem and how will we solve it?", we ask, "What is the future we want to create, and what will it take to get there?" Instead of "Can we trust them if we share our stuff?", we ask, "What can we accomplish together that none of us can accomplish on our own?" Instead of "How will we pay for that?", we ask, "What resources do we have together that none of us has on our own?" These questions look forward instead of backward. How ironic that we only need to look back to our roots to find the right questions for the future!

I have been thinking about forming NRC chapters in six to eight geographical regions in the State, to work with leaders to pool our collective knowledge and resources for a better system of resource recovery. And I'm wondering - are you interested? Can we create the future we want by partnering with one another, region to region, community to community, hub to spoke, landfill operator to recycling processor, business to business, person to person? After all, this will be our world for a very long time. Let's treat it with the spirit of shared abundance, and create the future we desire right here in Nebraska.

All my best,

Julie Diegel

P.S. There will be a second newsletter out this month before Earth Day with event listings and newsworthy items.

Update Your Contact List

Nebraska Recycling Council has new email addresses!

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Visit our New Website



EVENTS:

Shared Hauling = Shared Impacts Green Team Roundtable



NEWS:

Congratulations to First Star Fiber



Greater Omaha Chamber has awarded First Star Fiber the Business Excellence Award in Leadership. They are being recognized for their strong vision for the future, a dedication to the betterment of their organization, community, and a passion for developing others. Business Excellence Awards reception will be held on Tuesday, May

QUICK LINKS

[RECYCLING GUIDE](#)

Where to recycle everything

[APPLY FOR A GRANT](#)

Recycling Equipment

[BECOME A MEMBER](#)

Join us and save the planet

[DONATE NOW](#)

We can't do it without you

[CALENDAR](#)

Keep up with NRC events

www.nrcne.org

Become a Member!



Nebraska Recycling Council is a statewide 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization, whose mission is to maximize the economic and environmental benefits of resource recovery in Nebraska. Visit our website at www.NRCNE.org and become a member or make a donation today.



Nebraska Recycling Council
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