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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

06/11/2021

WSRA Announces 2021 Recyclers of the Year & Recycling Hall of Fame Inductee

Recipients were recognized at WSRA's Awards Ceremony, May 24, 2021

WSRA is excited to announce our 2021 Recycler of the Year Award recipients and Recycling Hall of Fame inductees! On Tuesday, May 24, 2021 we honored 7 organizations, businesses and individuals for outstanding recycling achievements. Our Recycler of the Year Awards Ceremonies took place as part of our Virtual [41st Annual WSRA Conference & Trade Show](#). The recyclers of the Year and Recycling Hall of Fame inductees are chosen by a panel of WSRA members, board members, and Hall of Fame inductees.

The 2021 WSRA Recyclers of the Year include these outstanding honorees:



Recycler of the Year, Innovation: The Luke

The Luke Apartments (The Luke) in Redmond, Washington is a 208-unit multifamily apartment home community. Over the last 18 months, The Luke has worked with Waste Management to reduce their recycling contamination through a multifamily housing pilot program. The program has been a success thanks to ongoing communication and residents events, as well as the installation of innovative EZ Box Openers. Thanks to these efforts, The Luke has not received a contamination notice from Waste Management in over 12 months and is the recipient of the 2021 WSRA Recycler of the Year (ROY) Award.



Recycler of the Year, Nonprofit: The Spokane River Forum

The Spokane River Forum is a non-profit organization dedicated to sustaining a healthy river and aquifer while meeting the needs of a growing population. With most Spokane County residents relying on the aquifer for their sole source of drinking water and living within thirty minutes of the Spokane River, protecting water quality is essential. The Forum worked with a multi-agency collaborative to achieve goals to reduce contamination in the recycling stream by harmonizing messages, reducing customer confusion, leveraging resources, and developing a Contamination Reduction Outreach Plan (CROP). Innovative work includes developing the Spokane Waste and Recycle Directory, a resource now used by 20—25% of households in the region to put waste in the right place and recycle right. In addition, an innovative Recycle Right media campaign uses animations and ads to increase public awareness and empower their stewardship through use of the directory. Partnering with the Spokane County Regional Solid Waste System, the CROP provides a path forward for agencies and stakeholders to continue to build on collaborative efforts. During this state biennium, Forum activities with stakeholders greatly benefited from receiving an Ecology Solid Waste Management Waste Reduction and Recycling Education Grant.



Recycler of the Year, Nucor Steel Recycling Business: Inland Empire Paper Company

Inland Empire Paper Company’s (IEP) business model includes continual innovation, environmental stewardship and a commitment to the sustainability of its resources. IEP’s paper products are manufactured entirely from waste or residual materials. IEP was one of the first companies in North America to revolutionize paper recycling (currently up to 350 tons/day), collecting waste paper from distances as far as 1,500 miles from its location in Spokane, WA. Residual wood chips from local sawmills (up to 475 tons/day) are processed in a state-of-the-art pulping system that includes heat recovery, reducing IEP’s dependency on natural gas over 70% (500 million cubic feet per year) and mill-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 45% (33,000 tons per year). IEP developed the first waste-to-energy system to consume 100% biomass-based paper sludge that diverts 45,000 tons of waste from landfill and offsets 100 million cubic feet of natural gas annually. Ash produced by the waste-to-energy system is beneficially reutilized into the manufacture of cement or as a soil amendment. Additionally, IEP owns and responsibly manages over 120,000 acres of forest land and plants in excess of over 750,000 seedlings annually. IEP is also committed to improving water quality with the most advanced water treatment system in the pulp and paper industry that includes the first microscopic membrane filtration system to treat 100% of its final effluent. It is this philosophy of innovation and versatility that has provided IEP the capability to offer our customers over 60 grades of specialty paper products produced on the most modern paper machine of its kind in North America.



Recycler of the Year, Public Agency: King County Recycle Right Communications Consortium

Since 2018, the King County Recycle Right Communications Consortium has worked to reduce contamination by educating the public on how to “Recycle Right” and “Compost Right.” This is achieved by focusing on regional and statewide similarities to make messaging harmonized, educational, and engaging. Comprised of communications specialists from public and private entities throughout King County, the Consortium’s campaigns consistently receive millions of impressions and have been seen nationwide. Campaigns include “Recycle Right: Empty, Clean, and Dry;” “Plastic Bags and Wrap: Keep ‘em out of the recycling;” and “Compost Right: Food in, Plastic Out.” All materials produced by the Consortium are available for public use and are designed to allow for co-branding, which helps spread the messaging as far as possible.

Recycler of the Year, Public Education: White Center Eco Living Center



The Unincorporated White Center Eco Living Outreach Program provided year-long outreach and a variety of services and tools to 513 King County Housing Authority households in unincorporated King County, White Center, through a special one-time grant from King County Solid Waste Division and Hazardous Waste Management Program. Partners included: King County Housing Authority, Resident Managers at Greenbridge and Seola Gardens, Boys and Girls Clubs of King County, Neighborhood House, Coast Property Management, Wilder Environmental Consulting. Team members from each organization worked collaboratively to provide innovative outreach to households through classes, events, services, trainers and tools in multiple languages to make long lasting changes in waste reduction, recycling and the reduced use of toxic household products.



Recycler of the Year, Public Sector Outreach: City of Olympia Public Works, Waste ReSources

The City of Olympia, a municipal solid waste collector and educator for its community, successfully removed glass from its commingled single-stream recycling program in 2020. The City used a focused approach to engage and educate its community using direct mailers, post cards, the annual collection schedule with material list, utility bill inserts, residential and commercial site visits, City website, residential Recycle Coach (a web and mobile app) and ESRI's ARCGIS Collector App. In less than two months, the city reduced the amount of glass in its commingled recycle stream from 22 percent to 7 percent. Glass is a major contaminate in comingled recycling because it imbeds into paper fibers. Of the 1,050 tons of glass, about one-third is now captured for use as aggregate. The change reduced recycle costs by \$93,000 and avoided the need to raise utility rates.



Recycler of the Year, Hall of Fame: Betsy Cushman, Methow Recycles

Betsy is the soon-to-retire Executive Director of Methow Recycles. Betsy Cushman has dedicated the past 20 years founding and then leading Methow Recycles in Okanogan County. Because of her passion, leadership, hard work, and vision, Methow Recycles is a paragon of what rural recyclers can accomplish. Methow Recycles was able to not only survive National Sword and related commodities market impacts as well as the year-long COVID-19 pandemic, but also emerge stronger than ever. Betsy led the Board of Directors and her staff through both crises, inspiring the entire organization to reimagine how recycling, waste prevention, and education and outreach were delivered to its community in a way that supported the Methow Valley's resilience to the pandemic over the last year. At the same time, her leadership and vision allowed Methow Recycles's recycling program to become self-sufficient and, as a result, direct more focus and resources to education, outreach and waste prevention. On April 30, Betsy retired as the Executive Director. She deserves to be recognized not only in Methow Valley, but also in the State for her significant and positive impact on recycling and environmental protection.



Congratulations to all 2021 Recycler of the Year Award Recipients! For more information about the WSRA conference and awards presentation, visit www.wsra.net or call 206-622-8425. Award applications are available each January at www.wsra.net.

The Washington State Recycling Association (WSRA), formed in 1976, provides leadership, networking, advocacy and education to foster the expansion, diversity and economic vitality of recycling in support of sustainable resource management. Its 280 member organizations and over 700 individual members include private, community and government recycling agencies, generators of recyclables, collectors, processors, transporters, broker, commodity markets, recycled content product manufacturers, and others.

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