



Preserving Resources,
Preventing Waste

The New Jersey WasteWise Bulletin

Newsletter of the New Jersey WasteWise Business Network – Autumn 2025
WasteWise ... improving your bottom line and the environment
through waste reduction, recycling, and recycled product procurement.

DEP Recycling Awards Spotlight

There were many impressive achievements in the field of recycling, waste reduction and sustainability in New Jersey this past year. The Department of Environmental Protection recognizes these accomplishments through its annual recycling awards program. The 2025 DEP award winners are as follows:

Institution – Saint Peter’s University

Saint Peter's University in Jersey City implemented numerous waste reduction and recycling initiatives that have benefited the environment and local community. The university runs a program that keeps edible food out of landfills and helps reduce food insecurity in New Jersey. The University also operates a food pantry, a used clothing donation center and recycled more than 750 pounds of plastic film in 2024.

Business - Garden Communities

Garden Communities is a real estate firm that owns and leases garden apartments in the greater Scotch Plains area. Upon learning that the recycling infrastructure at one of their apartment complexes was inadequate, Garden Communities made numerous improvements in the recycling system provided to residents. This led to a 30% increase in the amount of recyclables collected from 2023 to 2024.

Government – Township of Monroe

The Township of Monroe achieved a 65% recycling rate thanks, in part, to its successful curbside recycling program and its new Center for Hard to Recycle Material, which was constructed in 2024. Monroe also provides drop-off bins for old clothing and textiles, holds quarterly paper shredding

events and recycles polystyrene using a densifier. The township educates the public about recycling through its Enviro-Mobile, newly designed recycling guide, website and more.

Leadership – Fanwood Green Team

In 2024, the Fanwood Green Team launched a new collection program for non-traditional recyclable materials called Fanwood Cares. The program collects used crayons, gently used or new shoes and used Lego blocks. The items are then donated to various charities, keeping these materials out of the waste stream. In its first year of operation, the program collected 235 pounds of Legos, 420 pairs of shoes and 111 pounds of crayons.

Rising Star – Green Good Guardians

Green Good Guardians is a youth-led organization that implemented an innovative reuse program called the SecondVerse Initiative. The volunteers in this program collect partially used notebooks that would otherwise enter the waste stream, save the clean, unused pages and then rebind the saved paper into newly fashioned notebooks, which are donated to underprivileged students. The SecondVerse initiative can be found in 65 locations in New Jersey, New York and Connecticut.

Outstanding Educator/Educational Program – Sussex County Municipal Utilities Authority

In 2024, the Sussex County Municipal Utilities Authority (SCMUA) provided robust recycling education to county residents through a redesigned website, recycling center tours, events and exhibitions. SCMUA recycling staff also spoke at libraries, schools, civic organizations and green fairs.

(Continued on Page 2)

Recycling Industry – Atlantic Coast Recycling

Atlantic Coast Recycling, located in Passaic, suffered a major setback in 2021 when a devastating fire destroyed the company's recycling facility. The company overcame this challenge and opened a new recycling processing center in early 2024 that is equipped with the most advanced processing technology available today. The new Atlantic Coast Recycling facility serves more than 60 municipalities and processes between 16,000 and 20,000 tons of recyclable bottles, cans and paper per month.

Source Reduction, Resource Management/Sustainability – Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County Bike Exchange

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County Bike Exchange is a nonprofit organization run by approximately 50 volunteers who collect, repair and sell used bicycles in the Trenton area. The Bike Exchange not only keeps old bicycles out of the waste stream, but also provides affordable transportation and recreation to those looking for a refurbished bicycle. The program is funded by the sales of the refurbished bicycles, with the net proceeds of those sales being donated to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County for their after-school and educational programs. In 2024, the Mercer County Bike Exchange sold 1,857 refurbished bicycles, which resulted in more than \$211,000 donated to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County.

Volunteer Citizen: Mimi Zufoff

Mimi Zukoff, Chair of the City of Summit's Recycling Advisory Committee, developed and implemented reuse and recycling initiatives for numerous items destined for the trash. Seeing that the city's disposal of overflow books from their book donation center was wasteful and expensive, Zukoff established a partnership with a nonprofit organization dedicated to keeping used books out of the waste stream. In 2024, this initiative kept 21,000 pounds of books out of the waste stream, putting them into the hands of teachers and students in need.

Solar Panel Recycling Comes to New Jersey

For numerous reasons, solar panels eventually reach the end of their useful lives and must be disposed, reused or recycled. Commercial Solar Panel Recycling, located in Phillipsburg and the state's first solar panel recycling facility, is now helping to keep these items out of the waste stream. The company's recycling operation ensures that the four main recyclable components found in solar panels - glass, cables, junction boxes and aluminum frames - are recycled. While there are no state or federal laws or rules requiring solar panels to be recycled, it makes environmental and economic sense to keep these bulky items out of landfills and incinerators. For more information, visit <https://commercialsolarpanelrecycling.com/>.

Did You Know...

- Reusable transport packaging - such as bulk containers, pallets and totes - offers a sustainable, cost-effective and durable alternative to single-use packaging, helping businesses reduce waste, lower long-term costs and improve supply chain efficiency.
- Torus, a nonprofit organization founded in 2023 by students from The Lawrenceville School, provides a free food waste collection service in central New Jersey. The organization delivers collected food waste to Trenton Renewables, where it is converted into biogas. Visit <https://www.torusai.org/> for program and registration details.
- Marcal, based in Elwood Park, produces paper towels and tissue products made from 100% recycled fibers. For more, visit <https://www.marcalpaper.com/>.



New Jersey WasteWise Business Network

Steven Rinaldi
DEP, Bureau of
Sustainability

Steven.Rinaldi@dep.nj.gov
<http://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/recycling/wastewise/brbn03.htm>