

# NWRA recognizes best in recycling

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The **National Waste & Recycling Association (NWRA)** recognized innovators and leaders in the recycling industry through a series of awards given out Nov. 6. Awards in five categories were given to companies that have made substantial contributions to the U.S. recycling industry through partnerships, public education and innovations. Winners were selected by a panel of judges representing the waste and recycling industry as well as from technology and education organizations.

“These awards honor the very best in the industry for excellence in educating the public and [introducing] smart ways to recycle, creating innovative approaches to advance our work, constructing state-of-the-art recycling facilities, and [forging] revolutionary partnerships that help protect the environment and increase collaboration with the recycling ecosystem,” NWRA President and CEO Darrell Smith says. “Our industry continues to make great strides in safety, engineering and community engagement, which not only helps to make us a more effective association, but also yields better results for the environment and the communities we serve.”

The 2019 Sustainability Partnership Game Changer Award was shared by the Village of Mount Prospect Public Works in Mount Prospect, Illinois, and the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County (SWANCC) in Wheeling, Illinois.

The Village of Mount Prospect, a community of 13,595 single-family homes, 8,351 multi-family units and 691 commercial properties, has been a member of the SWANCC organization for 30 years. SWANCC is an intergovernmental agency encompassed of 23 communities. The benefits of this partnership have allowed the Village of Mount Prospect to thrive in recycling, NWRA says. The agency provides Mount Prospect with a range of waste management services. The partnership began with a document destruction event. This was followed by in-house recycling and seasonal electronic recycling services. Through this partnership, Mount Prospect has grown the recycling services it provides to residents, allowing it to successfully divert 35 percent of residents’ waste in 2018.

The 2019 Best Recycling Public Education Program Award went to Phoenix-based **Republic Services** for its Recycling Simplified campaign.

With contamination rates at about 30 percent, Republic Services developed its Recycling Simplified consumer education campaign to reach a national consumer base while focusing on six local markets: Dallas; Las Vegas; Jacksonville, Florida; Cleveland; Philadelphia; and Phoenix. This \$2 million campaign utilized a multifaceted approach to educate communities on what, and how, to recycle while reducing contamination.

Through initial research, Republic found that recycling was too complicated for many, which drove the company to develop its “Recycling Simplified” message and launch the new **recyclingsimplified.com** website, which offers educational content on what is recyclable.

In addition, Republic used more traditional outreach mechanisms such as billboards for their “Empty, Clean and Dry” message that offered insights on preparing materials for recycling. Direct feedback was provided through auditing routes, marketing and then re-auditing to gauge the campaign’s

effectiveness. Also, Republic's own employees were educated to ensure they also knew what and how to recycle.

The 2019 Recycling Facility of the Year went to the Plano Recycling Facility in Plano, Texas.

In December 2016, after a fire destroyed Republic's Plano recycling facility, the company worked with local officials to create a new state-of-the-art recycling center that would not only process recyclables using innovative technology, but also provide recycling education to the community. In mid-2017, they began to rebuild at the same location, but plans were for a bigger, more advanced facility with better equipment.

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) facility was finalized in 2018, and in 2019, operations began. Each month, 6,000 tons of paper, plastic, ferrous-containing metal, aluminum, cardboard and glass are processed at the 77,000-square-foot facility by a single shift of 35 full-time employees and advancements such as optical sorters that help positively sort fiber. To avoid a repeat of the 2016 fire, advanced fire prevention technology was installed, including thermal imaging cameras linked with remote-controlled fire suppression capabilities.

The facility will double in capacity when a second shift is added at the end of 2019, NWRA says. With that addition, the facility is anticipated to process more than 100,000 tons in 2020.

The 2019 Innovator of the Year—Recycling Equipment went to Ursa, Illinois-based **Brohn Tech LLC** for its Styro-Constrictor.

The Styro-Constrictor was introduced to the market in 2019 after years of research. The unit converts expanded polystyrene (EPS) waste to recyclable plastic. The prototype Styro-Constrictor was operated for two years and helped process more than 60,000 pounds of EPS. The equipment is portable, allowing it to be transported to locations with large quantities of EPS, and helps "constrict" these materials down to a denser plastic. It has safety features including emergency safety stops, keyed drive motors and a keyed chute lock.

"I congratulate all our winners on their outstanding achievements and contributions. It is important we recognize the good work our industry is doing to make our communities better," Smith says.