

Reduce...Reuse...Recycle: Library Goes Green Part II

The Library's efforts to practice sustainability in the workplace encompass almost the entire facility at the Midtown Carnegie Branch and the cause has been taken up by the building's patrons. Since early this summer the center city branch has been a participating member in the Central Street Recycling Coalition, a group of government and public institutions along Central Street operating as a model recycling association for other businesses and neighborhoods.

"The Library is a natural fit in the coalition. One of our many roles in the community is to lead by example and the public is looking for that right now. We are informed on the issues and capable of being a leader in sustainability," said Circulation Manager Gina Marie Walden, who spearheads recycling efforts at the branch. "We also have the resources to help educate our patrons about the need for recycling and other green practices."

Members of the Central Street Recycling Coalition include Ozarks Technical Community College, Drury University, Springfield Public Schools Administrative Offices, Central High School, City Utilities of Springfield, Greene County and the City of Springfield. Membership in the Coalition allows participating companies and their employee's access to a secure facility at the former Tindle Mill site at Summit Avenue and Central Street.

Participation in the Coalition has allowed staff at the Midtown Carnegie Branch to devise a recycling program that not only collects mixed paper, but also aluminum cans and mixed plastic. Attractive bins are situated in the staff break room, outside the upstairs meeting room and next to the copier on the main floor, so that patrons as well as staff can take part in this important activity.

"We started small, especially in the public areas, with occasional modifications as needed, but the response has been very positive. You can see visible results from the program, especially after an event in the meeting room or the teens vacate The Spot for the afternoon—the bins are full and it's wonderful to provide a service that the patrons are so excited to take advantage of," said Gina Marie. "Everyone here has embraced the green movement, so much so that practicing sustainability at work is becoming second nature. I think recycling not only makes people feel environmentally responsible, but it instills a sense of civic pride—not only are you doing something *for* your community, you're doing it *as* a community. It takes all of us in a collaborative effort to get this done—staff, the public, the Coalition and the Library's Buildings and Grounds Department, who have been awesome about helping us."

When the bins are full, staff from various departments are responsible for taking the recyclables to a central recycling area in the basement of the building, seen here with Branch Manager Jim Miller, where Buildings and Grounds staff pick up the materials and deliver them to the former Tindle Mill site, which is facilitated by Drury University. Employees from the branch have also been encouraged to take their home recycling to the facility.

"It all sounded more complicated when we started, but really it's as simple as putting a piece of waste in the right bin—reuse or recycle. I've been amazed at the reduction in our

paper order since we've been making more of an effort to print on both sides of the paper," said Gina Marie. "I love that you can see the benefits of practicing sustainability in so many ways. Not only do you reduce environmental pollutants by recycling, you don't collect nearly as much trash providing the two-fold benefit of lessening the amount of waste put into landfills and saving on your trash bill. And recycling can reduce the quantity of goods purchased and the amount spent on those goods, like in the case of our paper. All of this has a marked effect on the traditional cycle of production, consumption and waste."

The recent installation of new carpet by Zickel Flooring Company at the Midtown Carnegie Branch is an excellent example of how recycling can alter this "cradle-to-grave" cycle for the better. Before starting the project, Jason Rosendahl, crew foreman, made arrangements with Dick McNeal, owner of Cedar Ridge Innovations, for the old carpet (being removed at left by crew members Jerry Sharp and Arnold Lawson) to be recycled. Cedar Ridge Innovations operates as a material recovery agency specializing in collecting carpet and carpet-related products, such as padding and foam, and re-selling the materials to manufacturers who can turn the raw material into new products.

"Because of the downturn in the economy, only one of the almost half-dozen plants that manufactured recycled carpet have shutdown. These plants turned polyester and polypropylene made carpets into plastic goods for homes and automobiles. Shaw Floors has continued to manufacture recycled carpet but only when it's made from a particular nylon compound," explained Dick. "I use a machine with a laser that instantly tells me what the compound is so I know whether Shaw can use the material or not. I come out and test carpet now before agreeing to take it because if I can't pass it on to a manufacturer the material will just end up in the landfill."

That's not the case with the carpet from the branch which was loaded into a storage container, as Jason is doing at left, weighed, baled and sent off to Shaw to be manufactured into new carpet. Dick reported that the carpet from the historic building weighed in at 5,400 pounds, saving more than two tons of waste from the Springfield landfill. Once the old carpet had been removed, the Zickel crew installed the new carpet, which was made at the Evergreen Nylon Recycling facility in Augusta, Georgia, where Shaw turns post-consumer waste into new consumer products—a prime example of the 'cradle-to-cradle' cycle that proponents of sustainability are urging more manufacturers to adopt.

"The carpet installation and recycling is a great example of how the cycles of sustainability can effect not just the environment and the economy, but people too. There are so many individuals involved in this process, whose jobs depend on the supply and demand of these goods and services," commented Gina Marie. "From the installers to the manufacturers, again it's everyone working together for the betterment of our environment."

The carpet installed in the meeting rooms at the Library Center came from the Shaw Green Edge line, those produced at the Evergreen facility, and plans for the re-furbished Library Center young adult area, new Willard Branch and the new Republic Branch all include the use of recycled carpet from Shaw.