

Welcome to the OKRA online newsletter. Please feel free to share our newsletter with anyone who might enjoy reading it. To receive electronic notification of newsletter availability and general recycling announcements, sign-up for the OKRA listserv: www.recycleok.org/get-involved

OKRA Bids Farewell to Two Outstanding Board Members

By Shavara Johnson

This year the OKRA board says farewell to two of our all-time favorite members, Ilda Hershey and Garmon Smith.

Ilda Hershey

Ilda Hershey, long standing board member, is ending her time with OKRA as she goes forward into retirement from her role as Sustainability Coordinator at Oklahoma State University, and on to enjoy the more leisurely lifestyle she has more than earned. Ilda has over 20 years in the environmental sector, but her passion for the environment started long before then. She began recycling aluminum cans and paper after joining her school Ecology Club at age 12 while living in California, and she has not stopped recycling since.

Ilda initially began her career in the tour and travel industry, which allowed her a firsthand look at the vast amount of waste and pollution occurring around the globe. She was so impacted by what she saw that she decided to go back to school and make a career change. Hershey earned her M.S. in Environmental Science from Oklahoma State University in 2001 and began her career there, eventually becoming OSU's first Sustainability Coordinator where she implemented many successful waste reduction and energy conservation initiatives.

Ilda credits Susie Shields Derichsweiler with having been a tremendous influence on her, and it was Susie who first introduced her to OKRA in 2008. Like so many people who have had the pleasure of knowing Ilda, both personally and professionally, Susie has seen first-hand the inspiring work Ilda has done for our state, "Ilda Hershey is the most professional and dedicated person I have ever worked with and I am quite distraught that she is leaving Oklahoma. Ilda has impacted our environment in so many ways it would take an entire book to set them to words." Ilda served as membership chair, annual conference chair, and communications chair. "It has been a delight to lead the development of annual conference programs and communicate with the OKRA membership over the past dozen years or so," said Ilda.

"Each OKRA leadership team has 'grown' the organization and I'm excited to see where it goes from here." Michael Patton echoed Susie's words, "OKRA would not be the fine group it is today without Ilda. She has good ideas, a real sense of where we need to go, and was always encouraging us."

It is safe to say that all will miss Ilda and the contributions she has made to OKRA, Oklahoma State University and the entire state of Oklahoma. Traci Phillips said it absolutely perfectly, "Ilda has been part of the backbone of recycling in Oklahoma, her work and dedication has been instrumental in keeping recycling alive and prospering. A void will be felt without Ilda." We wish you well Ilda on your next stage in life, and we are certain it will involve recycling!

Garmon Smith

It is hard to know where to begin with the impact that Garmon Smith has had in Ada and Oklahoma as a whole. His impact has been truly astronomical, yet he remains humble and easygoing when being asked to speak on his life achievements. He is truly an inspiration to anyone that has ever had the pleasure of sitting down and speaking with him. Kara Berst from the Chickasaw Nation echoed the words that most people who have witnessed Garmon's impact would say, "Garmon Smith has been the foundation



Ilda at the Recycling Avengers 2018 conference. One of the many that she spearheaded.

OKRA Bids Farewell (cont.)

for recycling in Ada. He has been a constant force in getting and keeping recycling available to residents in our rural area. He is passionate about bettering the environment and backs that up with on-the-ground projects that get results. He is leaving behind big shoes to fill."

Garmon has always had an interest in the environment, which led him to pursue his M.S. degree in Analytical Chemistry with an emphasis in Environmental History from the University of North Texas. His career led him to the City of Ada to work for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as an Environmental Analytical Chemist, which is someone skilled to analyze the various types of environmental samples regarding the contamination of groundwater and soil. According to Garmon, the city of Ada held potential for more environmental awareness and action, but was simply lacking the tools, support and opportunity. In 1990, Garmon and a small group of scientists from the lab that he worked at took the opportunity to inspire the Ada community on Earth Day's 20th anniversary by holding an exhibit focused on recycling. The community members showed such an interest in participating on a larger scale that a group was formed, which was later named the Ada Recycling Coalition (ARC).

The ARC's founding members made it possible for the city of Ada to open a recycling collection center, recycling trailers and eventually through their strong voices and action



Garmon and wife, Nancy, touring Ardaugh glass plant at 2019 Okla. Recycling Conference

had the waste hauler contract with the city include curbside recycling. Garmon acted as a founding member and the Chairman of ARC where he spearheaded many of the educational outreach opportunities. He continues to advocate for recycling in not only Ada, but the entire state of Oklahoma. Through the legacy he has created, when recycling efforts are talked about in Oklahoma, Garmon's name will always be mentioned.

Aside from being one of the founding members of ARC, Garmon was also a founding member of OKRA, and although he has since retired from his position as a board member for OKRA he can still be found making an impact with his participation in OKRA's Product Stewardship Committee, where he hopes to educate more producers and consumers in our state on their important roles as it pertains to the environment. "Garmon has been very active in civic

groups that support environmental quality and has been a tremendous asset to the community and state," stated Doug Weirick from the City of Ada, "He has shown exceptional dedication toward improving the environment both locally and statewide for the 27 years that I've known him." OKRA and the entire state of Oklahoma thank you Garmon for dedicating over 40 years of work to strengthen the recycling efforts, education and accessibility for so many people.

Ilda and Garmon will be very much missed by the OKRA board. We hate to see you go, but we wish you all the best!

OKRA Welcomes a New President for 2021

Keima Kona Borsuah serves as Assistant Extension Specialist for the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) Solid Waste Program. She uses applied research to prepare solid waste educational materials for rural and underserved communities. She also represents OCES Solid Waste program on state and regional committees that derive rural waste policy. Keima's passion for environmental sustainability began back in her home country of Sierra Leone (West Africa) where she observed the environmental issues prevalent there, especially water quality and waste management. Keima has always wanted to be part of the solution to fixing environmental problems and ensuring environmental sustainability. She began pursuing her current career in environmental sciences by earning undergraduate and graduate degrees from Oklahoma State University in the field of Environmental Sustainability.

In January 2018, Keima joined the OKRA following her employment with the OCES Solid Waste Program. She served OKRA as an Advisory Council member for a year and assisted the advocacy work group with reaching out to legislators on Non-profit day at the Oklahoma State

Capitol. In 2019, Keima became one of the Board of Directors for OKRA where she assisted with advocacy, decision making, managing the organization's Facebook page, and doing educational Facebook live sessions that feature organizations and individuals who are making a difference in the recycling world. In November 2020, Keima was voted for by the Board as the President of the organization and took office in January 2021 for a 2-year term. Keima is excited for her new role as the President of the organization. She looks forward to working with her executive committee, board, staff and workgroups to improve recycling education, boost membership, and expand the network of the organization. When she isn't out saving the world, you can find her spending time with family, friends, and most of all, she enjoys running after her little girl. Additionally, she enjoys doing home workouts, taking walks, reading, and visiting lakes.



Meet our New OKRA Board Members for 2021

Natalie Evans is a part of the City of Edmond team, serving as a Management Analyst within the City Manager's Office. In this role, she manages projects and programs, and has the pleasure of serving the Edmond community. In addition to her work responsibilities, she also serves on the City of Edmond Sustainability Committee, composed of members of staff passionate about environmental stewardship. Natalie is a very active volunteer, serving Scissortail Park, the Edmond Fine Arts Institute, and other community organizations. When she isn't volunteering you can find her gardening, cleaning up trash, and viewing public art. She has always had a love and appreciation for natural environments, beginning with her upbringing in a rural farming community in northwest Oklahoma. Natalie experienced a renewed love for environmental stewardship, community revitalization, and nonprofits that complete this during her previous work as the Projects Coordinator for Keep Oklahoma Beautiful. As a new OKRA board member, Natalie hopes to inspire others with her passion for nature, the environment, and love for local government operations, while connecting more of our fellow Oklahomans to OKRA, its mission, and its great network. One thing that many may not know about Natalie is that in fifth grade, she won the school talent show for playing the trumpet while hula hooping!



Eric Pollard is the Air Quality & Clean Cities Coordinator at the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG). In his role, he works to advance clean transportation and emissions reduction strategies in Central Oklahoma. He believes that there are many good examples of how the "reduce, reuse, recycle," mantra is leading to major positive impacts in our communities. Eric's passion for sustainability comes from the enjoyment he finds in being in nature with friends and family, which allows him to better understand the impacts of his consumption and seeing the power of collective action. In his new role as an OKRA board member, he hopes to learn from OKRA members on how he can better serve our communities and work with others to foster innovative approaches to environmental challenges. One fun fact about Eric that so fittingly ties back to his passion for sustainability is that he actually met his wife doing gameday recycling at the University of Oklahoma!

Welcome to the Board!

Bret Scovill is beginning his 37th year in the Solid Waste Industry and is currently the Solid Waste Manager for the City of Norman. Bret's belief is that the less we put in the landfill, the more we save and that our primary focus is to reduce solid waste volume. According to Bret, "good custodians of the environment have good purchasing habits. We reduce best, those things that don't recycle or compost, by not purchasing them to begin with." For Bret he attributes his desire for better recycling efforts to spending time on the working face of a Subtitle D landfill. As a new OKRA board member, it is his hope that this opportunity allows for him to increase his network of vendor membership, which will allow for better purchasing options for collection and processing equipment thus improving recycle production in Norman. One fun fact about Bret that many don't know is that when he's not managing the Solid Waste for the City of Norman, you can find him showcasing his photographs in the Norman art gallery in an extended exhibition of his work as a photographer!



Michael Barton is the Chief Operating Officer for CDR Global Inc. He works to refurbish and resell electronic equipment for reuse, while recycling any non-functioning gear. Michael's passion for the environment was ignited during the early days of working for CDR Global Inc, where he realized the lack of attention he was giving to the decline on our environment. His role allowed him to see that if each of us does a little to be more sustainable that it could make a huge impact. Michael's hope as a new OKRA board member is to bring some fresh ideas as an outsider, while encouraging OKRA to continue tackling the issues Oklahomans face within the recycling industry. When Michael isn't working, you can find him taking a jog around the city with his mind on the cookies he intends to eat after!



Earth Day 2021 "Restore Our Earth"

The first Earth Day in 1970 marked the beginning of the Environmental Movement. Now, over 1 billion people around the world participate in Earth Day activities each year. This year the Biden Administration is hosting a global climate summit on April 22, 2021 (Earth Day). For ideas on Earth Day events and activities as well as tips for helping the earth everyday, see earthday.org.

RESTORE OUR EARTH

CHECK OUT OUR
EARTH DAY 2021
CAMPAIGNS AT
EARTHDAY.ORG



Ilda Hershey goes to campus every day at Oklahoma State University with several goals: one is to make it convenient for the campus community to recycle.

Hershey is the Sustainability Coordinator at OSU and is in charge of the recycling programs on campus.

Recycling bins are all over the OSU campus and in every residence hall. This is what Hershey observes every day as she walks around campus.

She said she takes pride in her work and loves seeing the impact of recycling on campus.

"I think it's created a culture of good stewardship of resources, and stewardship is one of the values of Oklahoma State University," Hershey said. "I think having the bins and having the program shows the culture and awareness for people to start understanding that there is this circular economy, and they can contribute to it."

Many colleges are trying to make recycling important.

"It's most important to reduce, not generate the waste, so generate less waste overall," Hershey said. "That's why it's in that order because it's more sustainable."

So why should people recycle?

Julie Muir, Zero Waste Systems manager at Stanford University, said she believes recycling is important.

Muir said waste reduction is the first step and universities should prioritize creating less waste. She said people should also recycle for future generations to generate business, create jobs and improve the economy.

Muir said people should also recycle to protect the environment and preserve land.

Hershey said individuals should recycle at the university or the city level because people are diverting material from the landfill, and they don't have to pay to bury it.

Hershey said recycling is seen in everyday things like Amazon boxes.

"So the question is, would we rather cut down trees to make these boxes or would we rather gather everyone's old boxes and make new boxes?" Hershey asked.

Hershey said it makes sense to recycle in Oklahoma because the state has places that take recyclable materials.

Hershey said in Oklahoma and in surrounding states it does make sense because there are paper mills that take used paper of any type to make new paper cardboard products. She also said metal smelters will take scrap metal, aluminum cans and food cans.

Hershey said some plastic processors in the state of Oklahoma make plastic lumber, which is one of the plastics that is recycled.

Dr. Steven Mackie is an associate professor of education and co-faculty sponsor of the student organization CORE — Conserving Our Ranger Environment — at the Northwestern Oklahoma State University's campus in Enid.

Mackie said recycling is not a new idea, and one that has always been around.

"I mean, if you were living on a farm, in the '20s, '30s, '40s, '50s, you recycled everything," Mackie said. "You used that pickle jar for canning purposes or a water glass or a cereal bowl. You use newspapers to wash your windows, and you didn't buy paper towels. The whole idea of recycling is kind of not new. People have been doing it for thousands of years."

Mackie said some short-term economic impacts occur from recycling.

"It may cost the city or the campus a little bit upfront to get a recycling program going and started, but in the long run, if the community actively recycles, then 50% of less landfill waste goes into the landfill," Mackie said.

Mackie said recycling is a good first step to get people to really think about how they use the products that they buy.

"When you start recycling, I think it opens up your thinking about maybe not consuming so much," he said.

Mackie said recycling has gotten people to think about their use of single-use containers.

"Whether it be aluminum cans or plastic bottles or a box from Amazon," Mackie said, "I think it just raises awareness, but it also makes the janitor's jobs a lot easier because there's half the trash in the trash cans."

Lorenzo Macaluso, Director of Client Services at the Center for Ecotechnology, said recycling on campus impacts a university culturally, and that sends a message to students and faculty about the importance of sustainability.

Macaluso said a couple of important things about recycling is the quality and organization of materials when recycling. He said if you have the wrong things mixed in there, then it really wreaks havoc on the recycling system.

"One of the main things that the industry has focused on is good quality recycling, separating the right things and making sure that the specs are aligned with where they're going," Macaluso said.

Barry Sparks, facilities management outreach and desk-side recycling program manager at The University of Colorado Boulder, agrees that people should recycle.

Sparks said recycling is one piece of the sustainability puzzle.

"Sustainability encompasses a broad range of issues, including social justice, climate change, and environmental stewardship," Sparks said. "In a consumer-driven society, creating a robust circular economy can be the alternative to the wasteful linear economy consumerism fosters."

Sparks said he believes people should recycle on campus, too.

"We should recycle everywhere," Sparks said, "but as students taking leadership roles in the society they will be pursuing careers in, having an on-campus recycling program is one avenue to engage in and practice leadership skills while learning more about the social and environmental benefits of sustainable practices."

He said a successful program will attract students who are environmentally engaged and will help solve the problems of climate change and social injustice.

Muir said one important thing about recycling that most people don't realize is that it has many economic benefits, not just environmental benefits.

She said the economic benefits are more on the business side. She said people don't realize that the job creation caused by recycling is incredible.

"What I try to tell people is, when you put that bottle or that can or that paper into the recycling bin, you start a chain of reactions," Muir said. "A chain of businesses are going to come into play just because you did that."

Recycling is a common sight anywhere that people might not even think about. It does not have to be so complicated, she said.

For example, Muir said she had friends who were fishermen and supported recycling because they learned how harmful the plastic in the ocean is. She said she was able to tell them how plastics in the ocean impacted fish.

"Even hunters were able to support the plastic bag ban that we had because they got tired of seeing bags in the trees when they're hunting," Muir said. "Also, the flooding that the bags can cause if they're blocking a storm drain or something. So you always try to figure out how it goes back to why people should recycle."

Hershey said generating less waste is a key tip when talking about why people should recycle.

"It's more important to reduce waste and not generate it in the first place," Hershey said. "That's why the saying, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle is in that particular order."

Recycling on campus helps better market the university in a positive way. Muir said a lot of students want a sustainable university.

"Students want to know that their university is making good judgments on these things," Muir said. "We do really well in the area of sustainability and waste, and that has been used as a marketing tool. We're on the Green Schools list. We're on the Sierra Club list. We're on the Princeton Review list as being, you know, all these different things."

Muir said recycling also affects the local community that surrounds the university.

"A lot of programs, the university started, and then the local government then got involved after they saw the stuff that was happening at the university," Muir said. "I think universities are agents of change in their communities and are respected for that."

Muir said recycling is important, and people are essential to the system.



"It's not just a mindless thing that you're doing," Muir said. "No matter where you are, you know, you're at school, you're at work, you're at a football game, wherever you are. That decision really makes a difference to get good clean recyclables."

Sarah Ballew, Director of Energy and Sustainability Services at The University of Oklahoma, said people should recycle to reduce emissions.

Ballew said recycling eliminates the need to source virgin materials and reduces emissions associated with the manufacturing processes that would mine and transport virgin materials. She said the EPA has a WARM calculator that quantifies the emission reductions associated with recycling and waste reduction efforts.

Ballew said it impacts land utilization and social justice. She said a finite amount of space is available on the planet for people to share and live on.

"Landfills are typically placed in low-income areas," Ballew said. "Landfills can also leach and pollute the environment."

Ballew said recycling impacts the economy, too.

"While the market value of recycled materials has fluctuated (and dropped) greatly in the last two years, the cost of

disposing waste has also increased and will continue to escalate," Ballew said.

Dana Kelly, Program Assistant and Office Manager at the University of Colorado Boulder Environmental Center, said college campuses have a responsibility to implement solutions reducing waste in their campus communities.

"Recycling on campus is important because college is a place where students are learning how to be responsible – not only for themselves, but for the world they live in," Kelly said. "When we start paying attention to the waste we create and how to avoid waste in the first place, we become better world citizens."

She also said recycling curtails climate change, saves energy, conserves water, creates jobs, and makes sense in terms of how people should use the Earth's finite resources.

Dr. Mackie said the bottom line of recycling is not a new concept.

"People have been doing it for thousands of years," Mackie said. "It's just the right thing to do."



International Compost Awareness Week (ICAW) is May 2-8th. Be sure to check out OKRA's FAQ page for information and resources on composting [here](#), and give the Oklahoma Compost Conference, a program of the Oklahoma Compost & Sustainability Association, a follow to catch local ICAW events.

<https://www.facebook.com/okcompostconference> | <http://instagram.com/okcompost> | <https://twitter.com/OklahomaCompost> | <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1hvDIJvl5mUrRRjdiJ2LQ>

Recycling Fun

Each year the Choctaw Nation conducts a used toy drive for children. This is in partnership with the Native American Ministries in Durant for distribution throughout all of Oklahoma. They get an assortment of new and used toys for this worthy cause. This year they collected 541 pounds of toys that helped out 28 families!



OKRA's Inaugural Lunch and Learn

The Oklahoma Recycling Association kicked off the first Lunch & Learn virtual event on February 11th with guest speaker Ashely DiGregorio, Recycling Markets Program Manager for the Pennsylvania Resource Council (PRC). Ashley took time to discuss with our large virtual audience about the success of PRC's traveling glass recycling bin program in the Pittsburgh area, where she broke down what inspired them to create the program, difficulties they faced, and how they overcame those difficulties. PRC currently runs a very successful glass recycling program for the residents in the community whose residents desperately wanted to still be able to recycle their glass when curbside programs stopped accepting it.

PRC's mission is to lead and promote individuals to collective action to prevent waste and conserve Pennsylvania's environmental resources for each generation. Similar to the issue that Oklahoma now faces, Pittsburgh began experiencing glass recycling being cut from their curbside program. OKRA invited Ashley to speak in the hopes that Oklahomans could gain insights on how residents and community leaders in Oklahoma could come together and bring about more glass recycling options similarly to what was achieved by



PRC. Ashely emphasized the importance of the community's desire to have glass recycling for being at the center of their success. PRC focused on making the pop-up recycling trailers both accessible and easy to monitor, but it was also important to them that they continue to educate and do outreach initiatives in the communities they served.

They have been fortunate to have little contamination in their unmanned glass recycling trailers and Ashley gives most of the credit to the people in the community, stating "ultimately residents really have a strong desire to have glass recycling available to them, and don't want to jeopardize the service available to them." Bin design also play a role in lowering contamination, given that when bins are designed to only accept specific materials it is that much harder for people to discard non-accepted materials. With these new insights, and what seems like a genuine interest from so many people in Oklahoma, OKRA's hope is to get more conversations going about how to bring about our own glass recycling success story.

Join the official OKRA Glass Recycling workgroup by emailing your name and contact information to: info@recycleok.org!

Republic Services Partners with City of Norman to Host Super Recyclers Contest

Norman (Feb. 24, 2021) – Republic Services is partnering with the City of Norman to host a super recyclers contest during the month of March.

Every week in March, Republic Services will select 100 super recyclers to receive a \$25 gift card or certificate to a local business or restaurant. At the end of the month, residents with recycling carts that aren't contaminated will be entered into the grand prize drawing for a YETI cooler.

"Republic Services understands that Norman residents want to be good stewards of the environment," said Modesto Dominguez, general manager of Republic Services in Oklahoma City. "This contest will recognize residents who practice proper recycling habits and help keep our community clean and green."

Residents can participate by learning and practicing proper recycling habits. To learn more about recycling items properly, visit Republic's [Recycling Simplified](#) platform, which breaks down recycling into three simple steps.

Know what to throw – Each community is unique. Generally, you can always recycle aluminum cans, plastic bottles and milk jugs and cardboard boxes and paper products.



Empty. Clean. Dry.™ – When recycling items, make sure each container is free of food or other residues. Take a few moments to rinse and dry items before tossing them in your recycling bin.

Don't bag it – Never bag your recyclable items. Just throw them in the bin loose.

Additionally, residents should review which items are recyclable in Norman by visiting the City's [website](#).

After reviewing the information, residents can put what they learned into practice by properly recycling items at home every week and placing their properly sorted recycling cart on the curb.

During collections, Republic will be in your neighborhood to check recycling carts for properly recycled items. Winners will be notified via a tag on their cart and receive their gift card in the mail.

WHAT: Super Recyclers of Norman Contest

WHEN: Starting March 8, and running for one month.

HOW: Properly recycle items at home and place recycling bin on the curb

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2021-2022 OKRA Board and Technical Council

Executive Committee

Keima Borsuah – President
Vacant – Vice President
Crystal Bennett – Secretary
Sara Ivey – Treasurer
Tracy Horst – Past President
Michael Patton – At Large



Board Members

Michael Barton *
Kara Berst
Natalie Evans *
Trudi Logan
Bob Masterson
Jeanette Nance
Eric Pollard *
Amanda Scofield
Bret Scovill *
Megan Waters

*Denotes new members

A complete list of OKRA members will be published in the next edition of the OKRA News. If you aren't already a member, join today at www.recycleok.org

OKRA Technical Council 2021

Diana Askins, Tulsa Master Recyclers (volunteer training & management)
Scott Smith, Republic Services (hauling services)
Chris Feeney, Keepin' Enid Green (Rural Recycling)
Bryce Hulsey, OK Dept. of Env. Quality (OK recycling vendors / markets)
Chris Knight, City of Stillwater (convenience collection centers)
Jason Lilley, Choctaw Nation (Rural recycling)
Trudy Nevland, City of Ada Recycling (drop-off center/promotion & educ.)
Julie Maher, Ardmore Beautification Council (beautification)
Natalie Mallory, Full Sun Composting (composting)
Traci Phillips, Natural Evolution (electronics recycling)
Robert Pickens, American Waste Control ((Operations, Acquisitions, Marketing, Sales, Education, Transportation, Website Design).
Fenton Rood, Retired OK Dept. of Environmental Quality (solid waste/recycling)
Garmon Smith, Ada Recycling Coalition (product stewardship)
Larry Wright, Western Oklahoma (rural issues)

OKRA Staff

Ellen Bussert, Programs Director
Shavara Johnson, Communications Manager

OKRA's Elite Corporate Members 2021

Corporate Platinum Members



Corporate Silver Members



Corporate Bronze Members



Natural Evolution, Inc.



An Electronics Recycling Company



Passionate about Oklahoma Recycling, but not yet an OKRA Member?

Join our network of Oklahomans working to improve recycling across the state! As an OKRA member, you have contact with Oklahoma businesses and governments that are recycling in Oklahoma. Sharing information and resources helps grow Oklahoma's recycling programs and industries.

OKRA members receive a discount to the annual conference, recognition on the OKRA webpage (for corporate, government and nonprofit members) and newsletter, and an annual membership directory.

To join, or for more info, go to: www.recycleok.org, or contact Ellen Bussert at okra.secretary@gmail.com



Highlight your 2021 recycling events
in the OKRA News!

Send photos and articles to trudi.logan@us.af.mil
to submit for an upcoming edition!