

Keep West Kentucky Clean: Recycle NOW!

By: LaShea Wyatt

How many people in Western Kentucky have heard of The Jackson Purchase Resource Conservation and Development Foundation? Did you know that it is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization which serves the counties of Ballard, Calloway, Carlisle, Fulton, Graves, Hickman, Marshall, and McCracken. Their corporate mission is to make wise use of our natural and human resources, and they extend a welcome for others to strengthen our community through measurable and sustainable means for the benefit of all.

The Foundation was just the organization that Merle Paschedag was looking for when he moved to Paducah in July of 2005. "When I moved here, I tried to recycle my paper and cardboard from the move," Merle explained. "I had a hard time finding a company or organization that would take it. I researched and found out

that although attempted a few times previously, the City of Paducah did not have a recycling program. I found out about Mason's Recycling which answered some of my recycling needs i.e. paper, cardboard, aluminum."

I started to collect my neighbor's recyclables and would drive out to Mason's once or twice a month. After a year or so Merle started looking for others outside of the Artist Relocation Program in his Lowertown neighborhood, to discuss city wide recycling and the Greater Paducah Sustainability organization was born. "We started meeting on a regular basis," Merle explained. The first organized event was Earth Day 2007.

The co-directors of GPS are Merle Paschedag and Chad Beyer. GPS is organized under the Jackson Purchase Resource Conservation and Development Foundation, a 501(c)(3) tax exempt corporation.. The organization's mission is to focus on developing and implementing long-term environmentally focused sustainable programs for the greater Paducah McCracken County Area. This takes place through partnerships between communities, organizations, businesses, and government agencies. RecycleNow is the first initiative that GPS is undertaking.

Mr. Paschedag was very excited when he told me the plans for the upcoming New Year. GPS-RecycleNow plans to further recycling awareness in Paducah and McCracken County through advertising and the best advertisement he told me was by word of mouth. The committee plans to increase the number of drop off events such as the ones that takes place at the Park Avenue Kroger parking lot. One very important plan is to locate and secure a central location for drop offs which would reduce the number of volunteers and the amount of set up and tear down time for each event. After a central location can be established Mr. Paschedag would like to implement weekly events. Another main goal is to work with the City of Paducah to equip curbside recycling and to partner with the County for drop offs. There have not yet been any formal conversations with the county but as passionate as Mr. Paschedag is about recycling I don't foresee a problem with establishing a rapport.

There are over seventy active volunteers while sixty of those volunteers worked at the last recycling event. GPS-RecycleNow started out with one semi-trailer container and



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Recycling is a way for me to make a difference in how I interact with the world, I have always tried to leave a place better than it was when I arrived. Recycling takes little effort once you commit yourself to participating - it just takes some effort to get it started.

--Merle Paschedag

a two small personal trailers for glass and plastic for the first event. At the last recycle now event they had three semi-trailer containers and a roll-off construction dumpster for glass alone. As you can see with each event more and more volunteers and people of the community are becoming involved and being well educated on recycling. Mr. Paschedag has a passion for recycling and loves to talk about it. If you are interested in learning more about recycle now and the projects on how to keep a cleaner environment feel free to contact Mr. Paschedag at recyclenow.merle@comcast.net.

Mr. Paschedag's passion for recycling is contagious.

"Recycling is a way for me to make a difference in how I interact with the world," he explained. I have always tried to leave a place better than it was when I arrived.

Recycling takes little effort once you commit yourself to participating - it just takes some effort to get it started. We are working to get curbside recycling in the city of Paducah and have had great response in the way of member donations, volunteers and people bring there recyclables to us and we are growing each month. Members of the community who drop off materials take the time to thank us for our efforts and often comment that they wish the city would start a curbside recycling program.

The all volunteer staff of GPS-RecycleNow plans to start canvassing in Paducah to establish what the public perception of recycling is. Are people aware or the advantages of recycling and the effect of landfills on our environment both current and future? Do they understand the concept of recycling? The committee would like to educate the public about our impact on the environment and the much-needed benefits of recycling. Mr. Paschedag explained why he felt recycling was important to him.

"Why recycle, it's simple - If you have something of value that you love, you tend to do everything in your power to keep it safe. I consider the Earth one of the most valuable things in my life! Don't you? Have you recycled today?"

To become a member of Recycle Now all you have to do is fill out a basic form with your name, address, along with email forward it to 326 N. 7th Street Paducah, KY 42001. The project does have a yearly membership donation which pays for GPS expenses and media advertisement. Students are \$10.00, individual households \$20.00 and a business

membership is \$50.00. (There are currently 35 business level memberships.) There are also corporate sponsors that donate \$500.00 or more. Mr. Paschedag told me that you don't have to be a member to bring items to the recycling



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events. In February 2006 they had just five members today the exact count is over 400. GPS-Recycle Now has thirteen corporate sponsors: Aarons, Crouse Corporation, i5design, ilistpaducah.com, Infectious Diseases Associate, PLLC, Lourdes Hospital, Paducah Bank, Paducah Printing, Purchase E.N.T.-Otolaryngology, Vascular Associates, WastePath Sanitary Landfill, Wellsprings Institute and Western Baptist Hospital.

Mason's Recycling currently handles every item except the glass, which is now sent to WastePath out of Calvert City. Glass has always been more difficult to find a suitable recycling company. After the first collection back in 2007, GPS-RecycleNow staged two thousand pounds of glass in a member's backyard and then hand sorted and carried it to a collection site. Wow! Our hats go off to the many volunteers that donate their time to make our environment a cleaner and more enjoyable place to live. Remember, the best advertisement for recycling is word of mouth and practice! You are starting a new habit. Try beginning with the junk mail that you each receive everyday or after every bottle of water, sports drink or soda and just get into the habit of recycling rather than throwing the container away in the trash can. Mr.

Paschedag told me that he simply started collecting cans and before he knew it he had so many that he began recycling.

The Heath High School Environmental Club has now joined GPS-RecycleNow to start a recycling effort at Heath Elementary School. The students will be placing recycling bins in every classroom in the coming year. More schools should join them and practice recycling.

Teachers at every school in the county district are encouraged to educate their students and GPS-RecycleNow will be delighted to help any teacher develop a recycling program. If any school or teacher is interested please contact Merle Paschedag at the email address listed. Teachers can also get a lot of help and information through the McCracken County Extension office Dava Hayden. She can be reached at **(270) 554-9522**. Just think if we teach our children about recycling and the sustainability of our planet and our local area they will grow up with those ideas always in their minds and hopefully, reflected in their actions.



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GPS wants to affect a culture change right here in Paducah and McCracken County. This can be accomplished in three ways.

1. Through education of our youth and learning about recycling and sustainability
2. Businesses practicing recycling and the involvement of commercial enterprises in ongoing recycling efforts
3. Residential recycling through everyday people like ourselves.

These three things in combination will force governmental policy change right down to the local level. We have to protect and sustain our environment and each of us can make a difference. If you want to have an impact on our environment, climate change and sustaining our society starts by recycling at home today!

GPS holds quarterly meetings at the McCracken County Public Library the next one will be on January 21st at 6.30 p.m. These meetings are free and open to the public. For more information please write to GPS Recycle Now, P. O. Box 3685 Paducah KY 42002, or please visit www.recyclenowpaducah.com and www.jpff.org or email them at gps.recyclenow@jpf.org. †