

One Man's Trash, Another Man's Treasure

Contributed by Lynne LaMaster
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It's our trash.

It used to be that when something was thrown away, it went directly to the landfill. But, today, there is actually a market for many of the items we throw out. It's hard to think of our trash as a commodity, but it is, and it can be resold, recycled and reused. And that's a smart thing to do for your pocketbook, especially if you own a business.

Residential

From curbside to final disposal, where does your trash go? In Prescott, the City owns the trucks, and they pick up the trash each day and take it to the transfer station. The recycled items are then picked up by Norton Environmental and trucked to Flagstaff. This costs the City of Prescott \$10 per ton, plus a fuel surcharge if the price of diesel goes up over a certain level (and it has, of course).

According to Chad McDowell, the Field Operations Manager for the City of Prescott, they put out a new RFP (Request for Proposal) last year and were able to get a contract that saves the city more than \$100,000 annually over what they were spending previously. "The city has finally come to a point where we have enough recycled product to be profitable," McDowell said.

How much is McDowell talking about? Well, Prescott sends an average of 250-260 tons per month of recycled product to Flagstaff.

Commercial

But the city has negotiated an even better deal for their commercial recycled product. Prescott hauls the commercial recyclables to Mattera Enterprises Recycling, Inc., in Dewey. Mattera Enterprises actually pays the City \$10 per ton.

McDowell noted that two years ago, the city started with 10 commercial recycle bins as part of a pilot program. Now there

are 108 bins in the city, adding up to about 100 tons per month, and that number keeps rising. Why? Because it benefits both the business owner and the city to recycle.

"I can guarantee you that you'll reduce your overall fee if you are a business that recycles," McDowell said.

As far as future plans for the City of Prescott, McDowell hopes the City can expand the drop-off facilities at some point, and increase the commercial recycling. "It's better than throwing it all away in a landfill," he said.

Visiting Mattera Enterprises

Joe Mattera is the owner of Mattera Enterprises, and he embodies the saying, "One man's trash is another man's treasure." Talk to him, and you'll speak with a man who is excited about recycling your trash.

The trash comes down a conveyor belt to be sorted.

"We are able to bring big city recycling to the Prescott communities," Mattera explained. Not only does he handle the commercial recyclable contract from Prescott, he also has numerous contracts throughout the area. "We don't want to cherry pick," he said. "If you're going to recycle, we take it all."

Mattera works with several other local trash pickup companies, besides the City of Prescott. Waste Management and Patriot Disposal are examples of the companies that bring him their recyclables. "It's all co-mingled," Mattera said. "Plastic, no glass, most of the programs don't have glass, which is good. Aluminum and then, of course, paper." Since the product is co-mingled, once Mattera Enterprises receives the trash, it has to be sorted out by a combination of people and machinery using a conveyor belt system.

Why doesn't Mattera handle the residential recyclables for Prescott? "The dynamics played out that we lost that bid, it's a bid process and that's the way it is, I guess. But we're trying really hard to push that commercial and get them to get that tonnage up, because that's going to offset the cost of what the City's paying the Flagstaff people. So, in theory, if they generate 200 ton a month of residential, and get charged ten bucks a ton, and we can turn around and generate 200 tons of commercial, and I pay them \$10 a ton, then it's not a loser. The whole program is a zero net, or maybe if we can generate more, it's a positive. And that's what I think they're all about, too. We'll support them however we can."

Mattera gave some examples of ways he can help businesses save money. "We do a lot of business accounts, like Print Pak, we do the plastic, we recycle that. Actually, the Ace Hardware store, we put in a small bailer for them, because most of their trash was cardboard. We put a bailer in, they run it, and bail it up, and cut their trash bill way back. And then we pay them some money for the bailed cardboard. So, it's really a good deal for them."

Sometimes, he even gets pretty creative in his efforts to help out a business. "We have one of the gutter manufacturers, in Prescott there, we did a deal with them," Mattera said, "Where they had some metal gutters that nobody was taking that they were throwing out, and they had a lot of cardboard that they were all throwing in the City bin. I looked at that and said, 'I'll pay for the blue city bin, because I get the material anyway, you put all your cardboard and paper in this, separate out the metal gutter and we'll you pay for that,' and then they also have the aluminum gutter which we pay them market price for. So, we put together a little package like that, and it's been great - it's saved them a bunch of money."

Mattera can even take in products that others don't, such as e-waste (electronics and computers) and make sure it is disposed of properly. "We can recycle things that nobody else does. So, whenever they smash the trash barrels, for example, or whatever, they get beat up, we can actually recycle them. Otherwise they get taken to the landfill."

Got Aluminum?

Larissa and William LaMaster brought in a bag with 3 pounds of aluminum cans.

Ever try taking in aluminum cans, only to discover that the return was just not worth the effort? Well, Mattera pays private citizens quite well for aluminum. As a matter of fact, it's probably even worth recycling as a fundraiser. William and Larissa LaMaster brought a trashbag full of cans; it weighed about 3 pounds.

Here are the current prices for aluminum cans, (although they are subject to change as markets fluctuate):

Kuhles (in Prescott) \$.50 per pound

Mattera (Prescott Valley or Dewey-Humboldt) - \$.80 per pound

Yavapai Metal Recycling (Dewey-Humboldt) - \$.80 per pound

By the way, you don't have to drive the aluminum cans all the way out to Dewey to get the higher payout; there is a dropoff location for Mattera in Prescott Valley, near Better Bilt. From Prescott, just turn right at Lake Valley and follow the road to C & D landfill.