

# Utilities

## IN FOCUS

Winter 2010-11

FEATURE ARTICLE

Celebrating 20 Years  
of Recycling



ORANGE COUNTY UTILITIES DEPARTMENT  
QUARTERLY EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER

By Jim Becker, Manager, Solid Waste Division

**W**hen I began working for Orange County in September 1989, garbage was collected twice each week and there was no separate recycling or yard waste collection service. My job was to initiate a recycling program for the single-family homes in unincorporated Orange County in order to meet the state's new 30% recycling goal for counties. The plan was to get households to put newspapers and glass, plastic, and metal containers into recycling bins that would be put at the curb once each week and collected by the garbage hauling contractor. In my first year, a recycling newsletter was published and mailed out to single-family households; two recycling bins were delivered to every household; the garbage contractors bought new recycling collection vehicles; a recycling processing facility and transfer station were built; the County entered into recycling agreements with 11 cities; and "Superboy" became the Orange County recycling spokesperson.



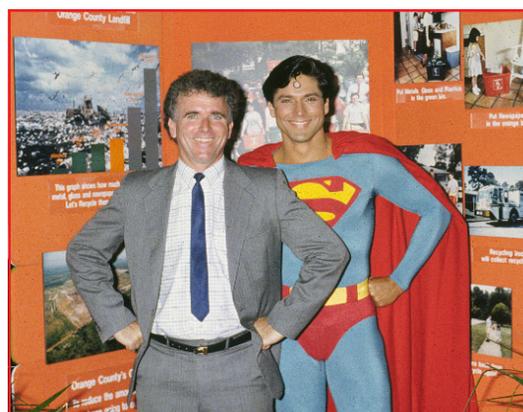
Jim Becker

In August 1990, residential recycling services for over 120,000 homes began. After a few years, Orange County met the 30% recycling goal as a result of the residential recycling program along with recycling efforts by private companies. Twenty years later, residential recycling services are now offered to over 197,000 homes and the list of materials that can be recycled has grown.

We are now challenged by the state to meet the new recycling goal of 75% by 2020 without state funding and during a challenging economic environment. We will continue to make recycling participation convenient and collection services dependable. At the same time, we will need to expand recycling opportunities and outreach to all sectors of the County. These main goals, along with a consistent list of recyclable materials, will enable us to make positive strides toward meeting the 75% recycling goal.

To see how **Orange County recently celebrated 20 years of recycling**, please see the Feature Article on page 4.

### ***Be part of the solution, Recycle!***



Jim Becker and "Superboy"

# Celebrating 20 Years of Recycling



By Debbie Sponsler, Section Manager, Solid Waste Division

For the past 20 years, single-family home residents in unincorporated Orange County have been able to place their recyclables curbside for weekly collection. The impetus to a residential recycling program was the 1988 Florida Solid Waste Management Act that required counties to initiate a recycling program and reduce their amount disposed in a landfill by 30%. The legislature also created the Solid Waste Management Trust Fund that helped Orange County and interested municipalities offset costs associated with the establishment of a recycling program. In July 1990, over 120,000 households received an orange bin and a green bin. On August 1, 1990, the curbside collection program for single-family residences began, and the Materials Recovery Facility began accepting the curbside materials. The facility was built to accept an average of 80 tons per day, and on that first day, the facility processed over 64 tons.

After a decade and a half, the Materials Recovery Facility was in need of modernization and an upgrade. In 2006, new and more efficient equipment was installed and ready for operation. Now the facility is able to process 20 tons per hour. Tonnage into the facility comes from Orange County's curbside program, other surrounding cities and counties, as well as from commercial recycling programs. Since the curbside collection program began in 1990, over 1.1 million tons of material have been processed at the facility.

Over the years as the markets have changed and processing abilities have improved, the types of materials that residents can place in their bins have been expanded to items such as aerosol cans, pasteboard (i.e., cereal and shoe boxes), junk mail, and office paper. In addition, the capacity of the recycling bins has been expanded to 18 gallons each in order to collect more materials each week.

In recognition of the County's 20 years of recycling and to further promote the recycling message, the Solid Waste Division planned events throughout 2010. An essay contest was sponsored in the spring for incoming 5<sup>th</sup> graders and asked students to answer the

question, "What can I do to recycle more in my community?". A number of outstanding entries were submitted, and the top essays by eight elementary school students were selected. The students were recognized in the fall at their schools as Recycling Ambassadors for the 2010–11 school year.

On October 19, 2010, a presentation was made to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) giving a brief history of the recycling program and to issue a proclamation designating November 13, 2010, as Orange County Recycles Day. In addition, six of the eight Recycling Ambassadors were recognized at the BCC meeting. Orange County Recycles Day is a local celebration



Orange County Recycles Day Proclamation and Recycling Ambassadors at the BCC Meeting on October 19, 2010

of America Recycles Day (ARD), which is a national event designated in 1998 and celebrated every year on November 15. The mission of ARD is to promote the social, environmental, and economic benefits of purchasing recycled content products and to increase recycling participation throughout America. Orange County's event was held on Saturday, November 13, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Orange County Landfill and included entertainment by Radio Disney, educational exhibits, and the extremely popular tours of the landfill. The event was well attended with over 900 guests.

As Orange County continues to look for ways to expand recycling, there are now free drop-off containers at the Orange County Landfill and County transfer stations. Residents who do not have access to curbside recycling can use the drop-off sites for the same materials accepted in the curbside bins. The next big outreach effort will be the launch of the [www.ocfrecycles.net](http://www.ocfrecycles.net) website dedicated to recycling in Orange County. The goal is for the website to be a central recycling resource for residents, students, and businesses.

While Orange County has made tremendous strides in its recycling efforts, the challenge for the County comes with HB 7243 that went into effect this summer and mandates that counties recycle 75% of their solid waste by 2020. At this time, there is no state funding to support this goal. Although there are milestones along the way, the 75% goal is a big leap from the current goal of 30% and will require a lot of education, outreach, and program changes for Orange County to be successful. Fortunately, the past 20 years have laid a solid foundation for growth in recycling and for Orange County to build on the current successes.



Children enjoying entertainment by Radio Disney at Orange County Recycles Day



The Orange County Recycles Day registration table was the first stop for attendees of the event.



Just one of the many groups taking advantage of the landfill tours at Orange County Recycles Day