

# Award: Program began small, now operates 700 sites

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 difference in small ways. Several small recycling operations came and went at the University in the 1970s and early 1980s, but no formal campus-wide system was established.

Then, in the late 1980s, students in the Survival Center formed a group with the goal of taking recycling to the next level. Kaplan, who had come to the University in 1988 to receive her teaching credential, established herself as a prime force in the effort.

"I was working in the EMU as a custodian at the time, and I was picking up newspapers and looking for a place to put them," she says.

In 1989, Kaplan became the student coordinator of the project and continued to work with the University to increase the amount of paper recycled, as well as to heighten awareness about recycling. Students from environmental studies classes and other organizations pitched in, entirely on a volunteer basis.

Around the same time, Jon

Davis was working his way into a job with the Pearl Buck Center. The center had signed a contract with the University to provide paper recycling on campus. Davis organized and managed the short-lived partnership in its first year.

After Pearl Buck defaulted on its contract sometime in the 1989-90 school year, Davis was left without a job. He convinced the University to hire him as a temporary employee, and he continued the program, recycling 16 tons of paper a month almost by himself.

"I had just one student helping me with the placement of the new collection sites," Davis says. "It was a monster challenge."

By that time, Kaplan and her gang had put up posters on campus, convinced the law school to use only unbleached paper and let many students know that more recycling sites were available.

In 1990, Kaplan was hired, and she and Davis formally joined forces. Davis handled operations, while she handled education. In 1991, the recycling program passed the first of two ballot mea-

sures to receive ASUO funds.

Now, Kaplan manages three full-time staffers and 40 student employees. More than 700 collection sites dot the campus — for paper, cardboard, glass and plastic. The program also collects and educates on the reuse of various other substances.

Davis, as paper recycling coordinator, now oversees the collection of 60 tons of paper a month.

#### Above and beyond

As National Recycling Coalition Awards Chair Lisa Skumatz says, a campus program must show more than impressive numbers in order to receive a NRC honor. Sixty tons of paper and 700 sites are large numbers indeed, but it was the less visible aspects of the University program that put it over the top, Skumatz says.

"They kept away from involving just a few and instead involved the whole campus," she says.

"We're all in this together, and everybody's kicking in," Kaplan says. "The benefits are for everybody."

Innovations and expansion are

trademarks of the University program, Director of University of Colorado Recycling Services Jack DeBell says. DeBell, whose program won the NRC award in 1995, says the University program sets itself apart by its focus on reducing waste at all levels.

"Nationally, there's a handful of schools that are doing the work that University of Oregon is doing," he says. "In several respects, it is really setting the pace."

Other recycling program directors also cited the University program's budget as a primary factor in its excellence. The program receives \$234,000 a year, funded both from the University and ASUO. In contrast, the UC program maintains a budget of \$400,000.

Kaplan says the administration has been supportive, but the program's budget has forced her to adjust.

"We model the [recycling] message," she says. "We've had to be really resourceful."

Financially, the program appears to be more of a blessing than

a burden. In 1995-96 alone, the program saved the University \$141,309 in dumping and hauling costs. And in the same year, 42 percent of campus waste was recycled, a five percent jump from the year before.

#### Looking ahead

In an age of severe budget cuts, the program's future probably doesn't include improved financial security. But it does appear to be secure. Both University President Dave Frohnmayer and Vice President for Administration Dan Williams pledge their continuing support, and Kaplan and Davis are planning ahead.

An increased focus on reducing waste rather than just recycling it is already in the works, Kaplan says.


Winning the NRC award was nice, of course, Davis says, but don't expect the Campus Recycling Program to slow down.

"You don't stop just because you won an award," he says. "There's a lot of beauty in going beyond yourself and doing a better job."



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