

# Program keeps recyclable trash from going in landfills

## Recycling consultant says current curbside programs are good idea, but costly

By Andy Raun  
Staff Reporter

A simple, all-inclusive recycling program would make better economic and environmental sense for Lincoln and other U.S. cities than conventional curbside programs, a Tennessee recycling expert said Friday.



John van der Harst, a Nashville solid waste management consultant, said a two-stream, wet/dry recycling program, under which commercial and residential waste generators would separate hazardous waste and compostable matter from clean, dry waste, would reduce the volume being buried in landfills and yield a greater recovery rate for reusable materials.

In the wet/dry program, wet waste — food scraps, soiled paper products, yard waste and the like — is put through a three-week composting process, then screened and allowed to cure for a year before being sold to farmers or others. Dry waste is sorted manually or mechanically and recycled if possible.

Curbside recycling programs, under which such items as plastic milk jugs, metal and newsprint are sorted out by the waste generator, are a step in the right environmental direction, but participation and recovery rates are too low and per-ton recycling costs are too high, van der Harst said.

Van der Harst, who has lived in Nashville for 11 years, is a solid waste management consultant for Nashville, Tenn., and Davidson County. He also has been a consultant for the Institute for Local Self-Reliance in Washington, D.C.

In the last three years, van der Harst has traveled to about 25 states and Canada to study more than 100 local recycling programs. He was in Nebraska for the Nebraska State Recycling Conference in Omaha, and he traveled to Lincoln to speak to about a dozen students and staff members in an East Campus meeting

sponsored by Ecology Now.

In pilot wet/dry programs, up to 98 percent of the recyclable and compostable materials have been removed from the waste stream and kept out of landfills, he said.

Recovery rates in pilot wet/dry programs are at least 50 percent higher than those achieved under conventional programs, he said.

But because the wet/dry program eliminates steps such as sorting yard waste from food scraps, the quality of compost produced can be poorer than that produced under conventional programs, van der Harst said.

Two-stream wet/dry recycling already is common in Europe. North America's first such full-scale operation is being built in Guelph, Ontario, a city of 137,000 residents. Once that operation is on line, other communities can watch its progress, van der Harst said.

Two Minnesota cities are using three-stream wet/dry programs, and debate is raging among recycling experts about whether two-stream or three-stream programs are better, van der Harst said.

Under a three-stream program, the dry waste is separated into recyclable and non-recyclable bins, and the non-recyclables are sent to the landfill.

Van der Harst said those who supported the three-cycle program were buying into propaganda disseminated by businesses and industries that could make more money off the three-stream program.

He said American companies that opposed wet/dry recycling were trying to line their pocketbooks without any real regard for the environment.

Americans interested in implementing the most efficient recycling programs must overcome corporate sway and go straight to their elected officials, he said.

"This is a classic citizen vs. industry fight," he said.

Regardless of its effect on established businesses, society would fare better with wet/dry recycling systems, van der Harst said.

"In the long run, we will be ahead with the high-recovery system — in ways not the least of which is quality of life," he said.

# Keep positive, speaker says

By Heather Sinor  
Staff Reporter

The most critical value issue facing the University of Nebraska-Lincoln today is how people treat and react to one another, the ASUN president said.

Andrew Sigerson spoke Friday at the East Campus Union as part of the Food for Thought fall series, titled "Weighty Matters that Can't Wait: Critical Value Issues for UNL in 92-93."

Sigerson said people could see the damaging effects of how they had been treating one another in several recent campus events, such as the disappearance of Candice Harms.

He also asked, "What possessed a man with a gun to walk into class?" and "What possessed people to gather around one another in front of the (Nebraska) Union around an evangelical preacher and yell in each other's face?"

Sigerson cited campus theft, acquaintance and date rape and the breakdown of minority relations as reasons to demand that people treat one another with more respect.

Students come to the university molded by different ideas, beliefs and values, Sigerson said, and they must find ways to overcome differences that are damaging.

He said educating students through a mandatory multicultural class, however, was not the solution.

"I'm not going to remember the book I read in a college class," he said. "I'm going to remember the Rodney King riots and the man with the gun."

Sigerson said he favored integrating multiculturalism within existing classes.

Within sororities and fraternities, Sigerson said, diversity is almost null. The application procedure encourages white men and women to apply, he said.

It's neither unusual nor bad for people to want to be around others like themselves, Sigerson said, as long as they respect others' values.

Sigerson said the way to overcome treating one another badly was to have a positive attitude.

"Things aren't so bad," he said. "Instead of telling graduating seniors how difficult the job market is right now, why don't we instead focus on how many students do get jobs?"

If students are upset about a problem, Sigerson said, they should fight for what they think is right in a positive way.

He said he believed the situation with former English professor Joyce Joyce, an African-American who left the university over an academic freedom dispute, was healthy for UNL.

"It gets us thinking," he said.

The fall Food for Thought luncheon program on East Campus is sponsored by the United Ministries in Higher Education at UNL, the UNL Lutheran Center and St. Mark's on-the-campus Episcopal Church, in cooperation with the UNL program in religious studies.

Sigerson was the second of three speakers in the program. UNL Chancellor Graham Spanier is scheduled to speak Nov. 20.

## Standards

Continued from Page 1

Griesen said the recommendations for the university system and UNL already had been published, but the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the University of Nebraska at Kearney still were completing their proposals.

UNL requirements are more stringent than the universitywide recommendations, he said. UNO also is likely to require stricter standards than the requirements set by the university, he said.

UNL standards will require high school graduates to complete four years of English, four years of mathematics, three years of social studies, three years of natural sciences, two years of a foreign language and one year of

another unit, preferably performing arts, to be admitted in fall 1997.

The current standards require four years of language arts, including three years of English, and two years of math, natural sciences and social studies.

By 1994, Griesen said, UNL proposed to require its freshmen either to be in the top half of their graduating class or receive a score of 20 on their ACT. This was in addition to the completion of the 10 units now required by UNL.

Griesen said he thought the tougher standards would better prepare students for college academics.

"I'm not sure we're doing anyone a favor when we admit them and then promptly fail them," he said.

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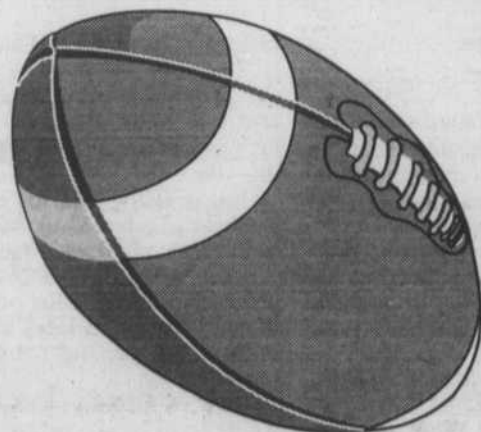


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