

Partnership helps Marion Campus near zero waste goal.

Written by John Jarvis, The Marion Star

MARION – A partnership between The Ohio State University at Marion, Marion Technical College, Marion Correctional Institution and Sims Bros. Recycling has helped the Marion Campus Zero Waste Initiative near its goal within its first three months.

The initiative, whose objective is to recycle or compost 90 percent of the waste material at the campus, in September reclaimed 82 percent of generated waste stream at the campus, which is shared by OSUM and Marion Technical College, as certified by Randy Canterbury, MCI recycling coordinator.

"It's been a great partnership," Canterbury said to about 30 people attending a news conference Wednesday morning in Maynard Hall at OSUM.

Greg Rose, OSUM dean and director, praised the efforts of those involved, saying the easy thing to do would be to contract with a local refuse company to haul away the waste.

"It takes a lot more effort and commitment to think about doing things in a different way, in a different path that allows us to, perhaps, represent a new way of thinking about these sorts of things ...," Rose said.

Pilot program

The initiative began as a pilot program in 2013 and was adopted officially by the campus in July 2014, he said. "All-in-One" containers are made available in locations across the campus. All solid waste is sent to a collection trash bin provided by Sims Brothers in a centralized location, where it is transported by the company to Marion Correctional. Prisoners sort the material at the correctional facility recycling center to remove as much material as possible from the waste stream to the landfill.

Aparna Dial, Ohio State's energy and sustainability engineer, praised the regional campus' efforts.

"The Marion Campus has certainly set the bar high for everyone else," Dial said, referring to Ohio State's main campus and its other regional campuses in Mansfield, Lima, Newark and the Agricultural Technical Institute in Wooster.

"It's not just about conserving resources," she said. "We have the opportunity to consider the example that we set, ... because generations of students pass through our corridors and the future behaviors are impacted by the campus experience and the actions of the university leaders, so we have a lot of goals including to be zero waste as a university by 2030."

Jeff Clark, Sims Brothers vice president of non-metallics, credited Canterbury and Marion Correctional providing "affordable labor" for making it possible "to get something like this off the ground and running."

Sims Bros. hauls the sorted solid waste materials, including bottle scrap, fiber waste, paper grade waste and polyethylene terephthalate waste, which is shipped to facilities including paper mills, which recycle it, Clark said.

"All in all, we're just tickled to be part of the partnership," he said.



Marion Correctional Institution inmates Edward English and Jason Hintz directed a tour of the MCI Recycling Processing Center, which is part of a partnership between MCI, The Ohio State University at Marion, Marion Technical College and Sims Brothers Recycling to make the OSUM/MTC campus the first zero waste campus in Ohio. (Photo: Bill Sinden/The Marion Star)

The initiative went forward after the two-week pilot program showed 3,545 pounds of material was processed, and an audit showed 89.1 percent of materials generated by the campus were recyclable.

Cost savings

Ron Turner, Marion Campus director of facilities and security, said the partnership provides the campus a yearly waste removal cost savings of \$5,100, while keeping an estimate of 90 tons of waste material out of landfills each year.

Proceeds from the recycled material fund equipment needs at the recycling processing center. The campus pays a "small fee" to Sims for fuel charges in transporting the trash bin from the campus to Marion Correctional.

While keeping a high percentage of solid waste materials out of landfills, the local zero waste initiative also provides Marion Correctional prisoners with an opportunity to provide a community service while gaining skills that can enhance their employability once they've left the correctional facility, Canterbury said.



A Marion Correctional Institution inmate empties the contents of a plastic bottle sorted from trash at the MCI Recycling Processing Center, which is part of a partnership between MCI, The Ohio State University at Marion, Marion Technical College and Sims Brothers Recycling to make the OSUM/MTC campus the first zero waste campus in Ohio. (Photo: Bill Sinden/The Marion Star)

"I believe men have to use their hands, do labor things, before they get established," he said.

Jason Hintz of the Waterville area and Edward English of the Fostoria area spoke during the tour.

"I was never really big on recycling until green initiative," Hintz told those on the tour. "And now every time I see a blue or green container and if I have a pop I throw it in there versus the trash. So it's kind of like once you're aware of it, it becomes second nature to recycle, not to litter."

English said working in the zero waste initiative partnership increased his awareness and provided him with experience he'd not had.

"I've gotten leadership skills, managerial skills, training skills," he said. "I learned how to operate a tow motor."

He said the environmental awareness he's developed has given him "something I can take home to my family. It's a positive ripple effect."

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