



*A non-profit association that provides statewide proactive leadership on waste reduction and recycling through education, advocacy, collaboration, programs and services.*

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## For Immediate Release

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## AROW Honors Recycling and Waste Reduction Efforts Throughout Wisconsin at Annual Awards Ceremony

**Stevens Point, WI (March 6, 2019)** – The Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin (AROW) proudly held their annual awards ceremony last week at the 2019 Wisconsin Integrated Resource Management Conference ([www.wirmc.org](http://www.wirmc.org)) in Stevens Point, at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Convention Center. The ceremony, held on February 28th, recognized individuals and organizations for outstanding work in the field of recycling and waste reduction.

This year AROW gave out a total of four awards and two certificates of recognition.

“AROW always looks forward to honoring those working hard in our industry. This year’s recipients clearly demonstrate the strength of recycling in Wisconsin with achievements in private industry as well as education,” said Meleesa Johnson, AROW’s President. “AROW is the voice for recycling and waste reduction in Wisconsin and we are proud to recognize these individuals and groups.”

The recipient of the prestigious **Christy Dixon Recycler of the Year Award** was Brian Jongetjes, President of Johns Disposal Service located in Franksville, WI. This recognition is given to an individual whose career demonstrates the highest professional standards. Brian Jongetjes has been a leader in the waste and recycling industry for several decades. Brian, along with his brother and business partner Ron, have advocated for single-stream recycling, and automated waste and recycling collection, since the 1990s.

Brian has always looked for ways to educate communities on recycling. He has consistently stressed the importance of specifically educating the municipalities and other customers in which Johns Disposal hauls waste and recycling.

Brian has served the industry in a variety of capacities. In 2005 he was appointed by Governor Jim Doyle to assist in developing a strategy for managing Wisconsin’s waste materials, and to report on the generation, recovery, reuse or disposal of waste in our state as part of the Governor’s Task Force on Waste Materials Recovery and Disposal. Brian also served as co-chair of AROW’s Glass Taskforce which identified issues and possible solutions for glass recycling.

Brian, and Johns Disposal at large, was instrumental in passing the “Slow Down To Get Around” legislation passed in 2013, protecting solid waste and recycling workers in Wisconsin. Wisconsin served as a model template and today 23 states have passed the legislation.

The **Outstanding Achievement in Recycling Award** is awarded to an individual or group that has excelled in their recycling program. This award was given to 7 Rivers Recycling, of Onalaska, WI, for their outstanding achievement with mattress recycling in Wisconsin, their commitment to its continued growth and success, and their connection to the local community.

7 Rivers Recycling, Wisconsin’s only mattress recycler, began recycling mattresses in 2014 in fulfillment of the La Crosse County vision to get mattresses out of the landfill and recycled. The process 7RR uses to separate the

different materials includes: “fileting” them like a fish; separating the exposed materials; organizing the materials; and sending them materials to markets. The primary materials recycled are foam, metal, wood and ticking.

As 7RR seeks to replicate its business, it was recognized in 2018 as a finalist in the Force for Positive Change award provided by the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, and as the 2018 Sustainable Processor of the year award provided by the Wisconsin Sustainable Business Council.

7RR has integrated into the community in many ways including: Having high school students in the region participate in a design competition of creating the 7RR logo; Having high school students compete in developing upcycled projects from mattress materials; Providing tours and/or talks to students and faculty; Providing free upcycled mattress felt to the YMCA Food Forest and other community projects for landscaping fabric; Providing ongoing updates and presentations to local governmental committees.

What has been the impact of 7RR recycling nearly 30,000 mattresses? Research shows a typical landfill-compacted mattress consumes 23 cubic feet of space; so 23 cubic feet x 30,000 mattresses = 690,000 cubic feet. This would be the equivalent to a football field piled 12-feet high with compressed mattresses. That’s a lot of space saved in a landfill!

The **Outstanding Achievement in Education Award** is given to an individual or group that has excelled in environmental education, specifically related to solid waste and recycling. Applicants may be from the public, private or nonprofit sector. This year’s award went to the partnership of Waukesha Parks & Land Use Planning and the City of Milwaukee Department of Public Works for their harmonized regional messaging for recycling in Southeastern Wisconsin.

In 2014 Waukesha County and the City of Milwaukee began sending materials to a joint Materials Recovery Facility (MRF). With a clear understanding of the importance of education, the County and City embedded education funding into the operating contract which included funds for an educational space as well as ongoing funds for continued outreach of recycling information for 28 municipalities.

The first stage of the project was the physical remodeling of both the City’s and the County’s educational spaces. Both spaces focus on teaching visitors how to “close the loop” by recycling and using products made from recycled materials. Thousands of people visit each space every year.

The next step was to harmonize recycling education. In partnership with The Recycling Partnership, the City and County worked with their processor, Republic Services, to identify an in-depth list of categorized materials. To create the list, the municipal representatives engaged operations staff, material marketing staff, and corporate staff from Republic Services.

To share the new information with a variety of stakeholders, the City and County, in collaboration with the Recycling Partnership, hosted a “MRF-shed” Workshop. This day of training in July 2018 brought together representatives from every MRF in Southeastern Wisconsin, the WDNR, and municipal representatives in charge of education, outreach, and driver supervision. The vision for this project was to make recycling information clear and engaging.

In total, this project not only benefits the residents of the City of Milwaukee and Waukesha County, but the team has made an effort to share the experience with other professionals through workshops and a webinar so that other communities can recreate the harmonization project in their own communities.

In 2017 AROW began honoring our next generation of recycling enthusiasts with the **Outstanding Achievement in Waste Reduction & Recycling – Student Award**. This award goes to an individual of higher education or recent graduate that has excelled with their overall activities, or a specific project, supporting waste reduction, sustainability, recycling, and/or organics management. This year’s recipient was Suzanna Baker.

Suzanna is in her 3rd year of school at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point and has settled into a commitment to learning about and understanding waste and the environment. Since June 2018, Suzanna has helped Rising Sand Organics (RSO) to successfully carry out their curbside compost collection service and scale up their routine. She is the official Bucket-Swapper of RSO, hopping in and out of the van, truck or whatever vehicle is working that day to pick up compost buckets from residences, businesses, and RSO’s free drop-site.

Suzanna is also one of 5 students in the UW – Stevens Point’s project-based, capstone class for waste majors (WSTE 485). In this class the students are tasked with advancing organics management in Stevens Point.

Through both of these projects Susanna has displayed impressive levels of dedication and motivation. She exercises excellent communication by listening intently and always questioning for more details, more perspectives, more ways to understand. She clearly demonstrates that whatever future career she pursues, she will be an asset as a compassionate and yet critical thinker. We can't wait to see what she will pursue or where she will land!

In 2017 we also began recognizing another generation of recycling leaders through our **Outstanding Achievement in Recycling: Youth Emerging Leader Certificate of Recognition**. This year the certificate went to Jerome Dickens who attends Thorp Elementary School in Thorp, WI.

In February/March of 2018, Jerome created a recycling competition among his fellow classmates to not only increase recycling, but to increase students & teachers' ability to recycle correctly! The school was divided into groups or pods based on grade level and were asked to recycle correctly. Jerome created a contest where the trash and recycling bins were monitored for just over a month and each pod was awarded points for recycling, but points were also subtracted for not recycling correctly.

Jerome and fellow classmates would go through the trash and recycling containers each week and award points to each pod based on their recycling abilities. At the end of the competition the 3rd graders were the winners!

When asked why he choose to create a recycling competition at school, his answer... "because I didn't like seeing everything go into the trash." What an outstanding young man!

Every now and again groups or individuals stand out that we want to recognize beyond our awards. This year a **Certificate of Recognition for ongoing promotion of Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle** went to the **UW-Stevens Point's Waste Management Society**. The mission of UWSP's Waste Management Society is to "promote positive interests and impacts in the environment and our local and global communities as they relate to waste resources." The Society is open to all students, because, "we all create...solid wastes" and by joining the Society members will better understand their "human impact (both positive and negative) on our resources, how different waste management processes work, and mitigate change to improve these systems to better human, environmental, and economic health".

However, in reality the members of this group are students in the Waste Management and Soils degree area. These students, regardless of their level of leadership within the group, work on ways to not only build capacity within their ranks but also to educate others about topics like source reduction, composting, recycling and waste avoidance.

Over the last year the Society has worked on numerous projects ranging from educational campaigns on how to reduce waste at the holidays and messaging via social media or posters around campus, to coordinating collection campaigns that bring in up to 12 pallets of recyclable electronics. They've also made composting videos and tabled at campus events to talk to students about waste and recycling. All this while staying committed to their studies and any personal jobs.

For more detailed information on each of our award recipients please go to our awards page on the AROW website at [www.arow-online.org/awards](http://www.arow-online.org/awards).

AROW is a membership-based organization, serving the recycling and waste reduction interests of citizens, organizations, municipalities and businesses across the state. For those who support recycling and wish to see more waste diverted into productive use, consider joining the cause by becoming an AROW member.

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### **About the Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin (AROW)**

Founded in 1990, AROW is an association representing Wisconsin's recycling, waste reduction and sustainability professionals. The organization provides leadership through education, advocacy, and collaboration and promotes effective, efficient and sustainable material recovery initiatives. For details on AROW, its positions and programs visit [www.arow-online.org](http://www.arow-online.org).