

WASTE NEWS

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A network is born

Firms partner to find uses for byproducts

By Joe Truini

KANSAS CITY, MO. — Kansas City businesses are developing partnerships to find new raw materials while beneficially ridding themselves of waste.

Several members of the Kansas City Regional Byproducts Synergy Initiative met Nov. 8 at the Kansas City headquarters of Hallmark Cards Inc. The 11 industry and municipal members are trying to come up with ways to match their raw material needs with byproducts generated by the others.

"Let's talk about 100 percent product instead of zero waste," said David Brewer, vice president of the Kansas City office of SCS Engineers and chairman of the Environmental Excellence Business Network. "In nature, there is no waste."

The EEBN is a Kansas City-based group that helps businesses accomplish similar goals while addressing environmental challenges. The companies participating in the program have agreed to share a percentage of their savings with the EEBN to help make the initiative more self-supporting.

The byproducts synergy initiative brings together area manufacturers, businesses and environmental advocates to find ways

to beneficially reuse industrial byproducts. It also includes regulators to help break down the regulatory barriers to using certain byproducts, which can cut one company's disposal fees while saving another on raw material costs.

"The bottom line incentive is typically financial," Brewer said.

In December 2002, the Mid-America Regional Council Solid Waste Management District contracted with BNIM Architects Inc. to conduct a six-month feasibility study of the project. The development team also included Bridging the Gap, a Kansas City-based environmental advocacy group, Franklin Associates Ltd. and Andrew Mangan, executive director of the U.S. Business Council for Sustainable Development.

"I think the opportunity to get involved and make things work in Kansas City are actually showing some results already," Mangan said.

So far, the participants are studying 25 or 30 possibilities, he said.

"Hopefully, we come up with

some synergies that will be useful to the people here in Kansas City," said David Watson, alternative fuels and materials manager for Lafarge North America Inc. "I think industry really needs to take an active part in doing this."

Lafarge North America is the largest construction materials company and cement, aggregates and concrete supplier in the United States and Canada.

Other participants include Harley-Davidson Motor Co., Boulevard Brewing Co., Cook Composites & Polymers, Gerdau Ameristeel Corp., Kansas City Power and Light Co., Johnson County, Mo., Wastewater District, the city of Kansas City, Missouri Organic Recycling and North Star Steel Co., a division of Cargill Inc.

The initiative is in its infancy but has achieved the crucial first step — bringing everybody to the table, said David F. Flora, program manager for solid waste and pollution prevention for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 7.

"It's got to be a leap of faith because if it was easy, they would have done it before," he said.

It also has to be financed, which began with a \$78,000 EPA grant. Public funding for the project exceeded \$150,000, which

the industry partners matched. The private funding was crucial, not only to get the companies to the table, but to keep them there, Flora said.

"Clearly, there's no guarantees that it's going to work," said Bob Mann, executive director for Bridging the Gap. "What you're looking at is possibilities."

Those possibilities brought Hallmark to the table, said Rick Robson, an environmental chemist with the company. Hallmark has begun working with a local composting operation to dispose food waste it generates in its employee dining area. The company has the largest food serving facility in the Kansas City area, dishing up some 3,000 plates a day, he said.

"We've been more driven by the regulation rather than the opportunities to get rid of that material, not as a waste, but as another source," Robson said. ■

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Mann



Robson