

THE RECYCLER

Newsletter of Recycle Rutherford, Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Fall 2023

Republic Proposes Recycling, Diversion, Green Energy

In-Person Program:
Monday, October 23, 2023, 7 p.m.
Heritage Center, Murfreesboro
225 W. College St. (just off the Square)

Join us for Recycle Rutherford's fall meeting and be among the first to hear what environmentally important programs Republic Services hopes to add to Middle Point Landfill's operation. The program is a continuation of a series presented to the community in the past few months to inform them about the operation of Middle Point, but additional information will be included.

The speaker, Mike Classen, general manager at Middle Point, explains, **"Most notably to Recycle Rutherford membership, the presentation will for the first time publicly unveil Republic's proposal to bring modern recycling, diversion, and green energy facilities to Rutherford County."**

The presentation will provide a behind-the-scenes look at Middle Point's operations and its role in the community's approach to managing waste. Attendees can expect a presentation with visuals that will cover various topics of local interest, including an overview of day-to-day operations at Middle Point, the financial benefit Rutherford County residents receive as the host county of Middle Point, and the long-term vision for the facility.

Those in attendance will have the opportunity to learn more about the life expectancy of Middle Point and what they should expect and be prepared for if the facility were to close once it reaches projected capacity in five-and-a-half years.

Classen is the general manager of Middle Point Landfill in Murfreesboro, a post he has held since March 2021. In this role,

Classen has full responsibility for all operational, environmental, engineering, and financial functions of the Middle Tennessee business, while also acting as the primary liaison for all public, government, and community relations.

Here's your opportunity to ask questions and get them answered!

Prior to this role, Classen spent his entire 15-year career in the solid waste industry, first as an engineering consultant planning, designing, and constructing municipal solid waste landfills and transfer stations and most recently as the area engineering and environmental manager for Republic's Southeast Area, where he was responsible for capital and remedial project execution, environmental permitting and compliance, and long-term facility planning and budgeting across the Area's entire portfolio of over 60 facilities.

He has a Bachelor of Science in biological systems engineering from the University of Nebraska and is a Licensed Professional Environmental Engineer.

Classen is president of the National Waste and Recycling Association's (Nwra) Tennessee Chapter and represents the state on the Nwra Board of Governors as well as the Greater Nashville Regional Council Solid Waste Strikeforce.

There will be time allotted for questions and answers; thus Rutherford County residents can have their questions answered in an open dialogue forum and can provide feedback.

Classen hopes specifically that Recycle Rutherford members can explore where the organization's goals align with those of Republic's as well as determine what a potential future will look like with these programs in place at Middle Point.

“Discussion of *The Story of More* in July Interesting, Enlightening

Several members gathered at McAlister’s Deli on Medical Center Parkway in late July to share their thoughts about the book *The Story of More: How We Got to Climate Change and Where We Go from Here*, by Hope Jahren.

The overarching idea that the group agreed on from the book is that we as a society need to use less and share more. Obviously, the way that is done is complex and multi-faceted.

Jahren originally developed the information for the book for an introductory class for college students and it reads a bit like that—a lot of science, some history, a little humor, and some opinions. She examines the 50-year timeline between her birth in 1969 and the present day.

Jahren argues that our current population consumes far more resources than our ancestors ever did and provides examples early in the book of past civilizations that feared running out of resources. There’s a certain irony in that as we truly now face the drastic consequences of climate change and our careless depletion of resources, the population at large doesn’t seem willing to confront and take measures to remedy.

The book is divided into four main sections: Life, Food, Energy, Earth. Within these sections, the author looks at how we do basic things such as grow grain and raise meat. Many of the topics focus on the “How We Got Here” aspect of the title.

It becomes very clear that the way we use resources in our quest for more generates carbon dioxide, trash, and other components of climate change. Thus, the maxim to use less and share more will certainly make a positive impact on our environment. That sounds simple, but the author makes it clear it isn’t.

I found one aspect of this especially discouraging. Legislation needed to put in place simple straightforward measures to slow climate change was introduced in Congressional committees years ago. However, in the polarized political environment in which we live, the bills never leave committee, never come to a vote.

In the Appendix, Jahren address ways to help. In one section, she offers some short steps to reduce the individual’s climate footprint: 1) Examine your values; 2) Gather information; 3) Strive to make your personal activities consistent with your values; 4) Strive to make your personal investments consistent with your values; and 5) Strive to move your institutions toward consistency with your values.

The book is available in print and audio, new and used, and in an adaptation for young adults.

—Suma Clark

Southern Farmers Seek Potential in Organic Crops; Face Difficulties

In light of our program in the spring on the vital importance of healthy soil, it is encouraging to learn that some farmers are attempting to return to a time of growing without herbicides and pesticides. According to a story in the *Nashville Tennessean* in June, Keith White is one who has made a five-year commitment to avoid poisons and build up his land. He is participating in a five-year program run by the Memphis-based nonprofit AgLaunch.

White is completing the second year of the program on 45 acres south of Memphis on Highway 61. An older farmer came to look at his land and spotted a weed he had not seen in years—a cocklebur. **Instead of being upset, they welcomed the sight because that meant that the herbicides that had kept the weed dormant were finally gone and it could sprout.**

In April, White’s land was growing cereal rye and radish greens and didn’t look much more impressive than weeds. But White was excited because **the plants were the culmination of two years’ work to build up cover crops, putting nutrients back in the soil and choking out weeds.** “You have to train it (the land) almost like a dog,” White observed.

At the end of three years, the land can be certified organic by the Department of Agriculture. The South has fewer organic growers than the rest of the country, largely because the climate makes it difficult to grow without chemicals. Most organic growers in the South are smaller and grow vegetables. White is a row crop farmer and produces corn, wheat, cotton, and soybeans on 1,000 acres in the border area of Tennessee and Mississippi. He doesn’t know any other organic row crop farmer even though organic crops sell for about 50 percent more. “If it works, it’s going to be very profitable,” he says.

The longer, wetter growing season in the South also creates a long growing season for insects, and the humidity encourages bacteria and fungus. Also, there are few resources to assist growers who want to switch.

Yet, some succeed! Shawn Peebles farms 1900 acres in the Arkansas Delta. He switched to organic farming 15 years ago to survive. “I was broke. All the good land was scooped up by large farmers.” He switched to older methods of using tractors instead of huge tillers. The first year he grew only 200 acres of soybeans, but he made more money than the year before. Peebles found he had to really stay on top of his crops because of increased susceptibility to weather and insects. “But I also realized that I didn’t have to farm as many acres” to make a living.

Recycle Rutherford Participated In Stones River WaterFest



Three Recycle Rutherford Board members, left to right, Johnny Stewart, Rick Racker, and Rachel Cornett, president, ran a booth at the annual WaterFest event at Old Fort Park, September 15..

Stones River WaterFest is an opportunity for Rutherford County 3rd through 6th graders to learn about water quality and the importance of water conservation. During the event, they learn how the water on the ground affects the water in the sky, trees and plants, all animals, and our communities.

This was Recycle Rutherford’s first year to participate, and we were excited to get to talk with more than 1,000 students from 50 classes about plastic recycling, the importance of looking at packaging when deciding what to buy, and the impact of our choices on the environment.

“It was a beautiful day, but **every day is a good day for teaching about taking care of our planet,**” says Cornett.



The recycling symbols on plastics are often misleading, making proper disposal of plastics more difficult.

Recycle Rutherford Membership Form

I enclose my annual dues to support Recycle Rutherford and receive the newsletter.

- \$25.00 supporter \$15.00 student \$100.00 patron
- I am contributing \$_____ in addition to dues.
- I prefer the newsletter to be emailed and am providing my email address.

PLEASE PRINT:

name _____ amount enclosed _____ -

address _____

city, state, zip _____

telephone: day _____; evening _____

email _____; volunteer interest _____

Please make check payable and mail to Recycle Rutherford, P.O. Box 1804, Murfreesboro, TN 37133-1804

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Global Warming Triggers More Violent Human Behavior

According to the recent newsletter of *E: The Environmental Magazine*, in addition to rising sea levels, extreme weather, and ecological disruptions, there is yet another aspect to this crisis that doesn't get much attention but is concerning: the link between global warming and increased violent behavior.

Researchers are starting to find links between warming-induced rises in temperature and increased violent human behavior. Indeed, a new study from University of Washington and Boston University researchers that surveyed data from 100 U.S. cities found that hotter-than-normal days—which we are getting more of every year thanks to global warming—coincide with higher incidences of gun violence.

Several other previous studies underscore the connection between warmer temperatures and violence, with murder, rape, and assault rates higher across the board during warmer-than-average stretches of days, months, seasons, and years.

Researchers believe that prolonged exposure to climate change-related stressors can lead to anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)—and that those experiencing these mental health issues may be more susceptible to engaging in violent behaviors as a coping mechanism or due to their altered mental state. Read more at

<https://emagazine.com/global-warming-triggers-more-violent-human-behavior/>

Dates to Remember

Annual Fall Meeting : IN PERSON

Monday, October 23, 2023, 7:00 p.m.
Heritage Center, 225 West College St.

Republic's General Manager Mike Classen presents future plans

2022-24 Officers and Board

Recycle Rutherford holds elections each April at the annual meeting; in general, officers and part of the board are elected in even years for two-year terms, and approximately half the board is elected in uneven years, providing for staggered terms. Because of COVID interruptions, the schedule is somewhat off. There will be an election in 2024.

The officers are listed below with the board members, who are elected each April and serve staggered terms. The date indicates when the terms end. The board meets monthly on first Mondays at 6:15 p.m. via Zoom.

Rachel Cornett, president
Bonnie Black, vice president
Suma Clark, secretary
Rick Racker, treasurer

Board Members:

Linda Hardyman, 2024
Diane Parker 2024
Beth Spivey, 2024
Johnny Stewart

Reminder: To renew your membership, please see the form on page 3. Dues are only \$25 per year. We don't want to lose you!

For more information, go to www.recyclerutherford.org

Like us on Facebook!



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