

# Eden Prairie NEWS

Eden Prairie, Minnesota  
October 15, 2008

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## Recycling incentive program debuts in Eden Prairie

Submitted by Leah Shaffer on October 15, 2008 - 2:07pm.

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Eden Prairie households are the first in Minnesota to try out a new approach to encouraging recycling. About 6,500 EP customers have signed up through Allied Waste Services to participate in the RecycleBank program, a system that awards points based on recycling.

This Monday was the first pickup day for the program. Maple Grove, which has a municipal contract with Allied Waste, is launching the program in 2009.

"We're very proud to be the first and we're very proud to bring this to Eden Prairie," said Rich Hirstein, district municipal services manager for Allied Waste.

Allied Waste is looking to increase recycling rates through this program.

"It's good for the environment and it's also great for Eden Prairie businesses," he added.

Through the RecycleBank program people receive points based on how much they recycle: Those points can be redeemed at retailers that include local businesses. Hirstein estimated about 40 percent of rewards people can choose are for local businesses (such as discounts for groceries at Cub). According to a news release from RecycleBank, families can earn on average, between \$200 and \$300 in point value annually. The recycling carts in the program include an RFID chip that connects the weight of the cart to the individual accounts. Households can track their points online and figure out what retailer they want to redeem their points with (the list includes 400 different local and national chains).

The idea of rewarding people to recycle seems like a simple concept but includes sophisticated technology and business partnerships to implement. RecycleBank was founded in 2004 and according to its Web site, "generates revenue by helping cities avoid landfill disposal fees." Including Minnesota, it currently operates in 13 states and partners with communities and haulers to implement the program.

Atul Nanda, the vice president of the Midwest region for RecycleBank, noted that people have just been waiting for a program like this that can encourage them to recycle more.

"Most communities that we're going into we're seeing their amount that they're recycling at least double," he said.

With the program, all recycling is single sort – glass, paper, plastic, metal – it's loaded into a large cart as opposed to small bins.

Nanda said they found that the cart system makes it a much cleaner system, and the fact that it's a larger container encourages participants to recycle more.

"Now with a larger container, they're more apt to put it into that container and recycle it especially now they're being rewarded as well."

Hirstein noted there are three different types of recyclers, those who would recycle anyway, those who are more casual recyclers and people who do not recycle at all. The goal is to turn casual recyclers into ardent recyclers and atleast get those who don't recycle at all into the casual category.

Before they started even tracking the recycling the new bins were exceeding capacity, he noted.

"Based on what we've seen already, it's been phenomenal."

He said they're looking to expand their list of recyclables.

"It's a good time to be in this business."

### Tracking recycling

RecycleBank partners with local haulers to offer incentives for recycling. In Eden Prairie's case, Allied Waste Services has equipped participating households with recycling carts that include a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chip which connects to individual accounts. When the trucks pick up recycling, the cart is weighed and points are attributed to the household's account. The points can be redeemed at area retailers. RecycleBank operates in 12 states but is planning national expansion next year. Eden Prairie is the first Minnesota community to offer the program.