

## *Mission Solid Waste Program*

### Project Description:

Beginning in 2009 the city of Mission implemented a new solid waste program for all single-family residential homes in an effort to decrease the community's carbon footprint, divert waste from the Johnson County landfill and encourage residents to lead more sustainable lives. The program defines weekly collection limits for trash but permits unlimited recycling, diverts all yard waste to a separate composting facility, and imposes a fee for any excess trash or yard waste beyond the specified limit. Triple-bottom-line considerations are an important part of the program. It demonstrates social equity through uniformity of service and educational opportunities, helps the environment by prolonging the landfill's life and reusing or composting as much waste as possible, and encourages economic growth by raising the standard of service for waste haulers across the metro.

The program has resulted in heightened awareness of environmental issues among citizens, and increased their opportunities to participate in sustainable decision making on a daily basis. A chief obstacle early in the program involved changing residents' perceptions about solid waste and educating them about the limits of the solid waste system. Many people had grown accustomed to throwing several bags (five or more) of trash on the curb each week and watching it simply disappear. Since this can no longer happen due to the landfill's capacity issues, changing the residents' habits and expectations involved educating them about sustainable solid waste administration and landfill capacity. This education took many forms. A series of public meetings about the new trash program were held in November 2008 to highlight the environmental, economic and practical issues faced by Deffenbaugh, the city and the metro as a whole in terms of solid waste disposal. These "Talkin' Trash" events provided citizens with opportunities to hear speakers from Johnson County Environmental, Deffenbaugh and the city. The events also provided the city with an opportunity to give away free items such as composters, yard waste bags and other program information.

### What makes this a Success Story?

The Success Stories selection panel highlighted this program for its innovative educational approach at the individual homeowner level.



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