

## Groups work to promote environmental initiatives

by Shawn Arrajj  
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*Photo by Jackie Brunk*

All Star Recycling in Pinehurst offers recycling services for industrial scrap metal, iron, scrap cars, copper, brass, aluminum, tin, appliances and batteries.

### Tomball and Magnolia address litter, recycling

Beautification and cleanup initiatives have Tomball and Magnolia seeking ways to promote recycling and reduce litter.

When Charlotte Riser Harris—chairwoman of Keep Montgomery County Beautiful, a nonprofit that works to promote environmental consciousness—started meeting with leaders in Magnolia to discuss their environmental concerns, one issue stood out from the rest.

“The No. 1 issue across the board was litter,” she said. “It’s not only for environmental reasons. It impacts crime, business development, community pride and our tax dollars and resources, because our government spends a whole lot of money picking up litter on the side of the road.” In a 2009 study, the Texas Department of Transportation estimated that it spends \$46 million annually picking up roadside litter. The report noted that the amount of litter lined up with the amount of road traffic, but did not differ substantially in different parts of the state.

KMCB is working to develop a program that will significantly affect the amount of litter on the side of the road in the greater Magnolia area.

Meanwhile, Tomball just finished its Spring Clean Up at the end of April—an annual event with objectives similar to those of KMCB. At the same time, the Lone Star College System is experimenting with a recycling pilot program, which could possibly be implemented at the Tomball campus this fall.

Residents are the driving force behind getting many of the City of Tomball’s initiatives off the ground, Tomball Mayor Gretchen Fagan said.

“One of the main reasons we do these things is because citizens have been requesting them,” she said. “It’s a combination of everyone being much more environmentally aware and everyone wanting to live in a place they’re proud of.”

“Litter-free zone”

With the city’s second large event of the year—Magnolia’s Love Bug Fest—set for June 8–10 at Unity Park, KMCB plans to use the opportunity to educate people on the importance of recycling and not littering. City officials expect around 5,000 people to attend the event over three days, which would make it the third-largest event near city grounds behind the Renaissance Festival and Magnolia Hometown Christmas.

KMCB received a \$2,500 grant from energy company Entergy to purchase recycling and trash bins that will be placed throughout Unity Park. Money will also be used to develop signs

explaining what materials should be recycled, how products are sorted and reminding people not to litter. KMCB will run an education booth with Magnolia West Interact Club at the event. "Starting with the Love Bug Fest, every event in Magnolia will be a litter-free zone," Harris said. "A huge part of getting people to do these things is just reminding them and giving them the opportunity."

KMCB plans to continue to work with the City of Magnolia over the next few years to encourage recycling and combat roadside littering. The group plans to draft a proposal to the community that will specify key goals and identify the groups and resources necessary to achieve them. KMCB's role will involve gathering resources, spreading awareness and organizing initiatives.

Another idea being considered involves working to get all the county roads in Precinct 2 adopted, which Harris said will give residents an incentive to keep them clean. Later phases of the program will deal with illegal dumping of larger items like refrigerators and televisions and will also look into abandoned buildings. Harris said those were the next two most common concerns among city officials after littering.

#### Tomball recycling increases

With Tomball being one of the fastest-growing areas in Harris County, environmental initiatives are becoming increasingly important, Fagan said.

"It really helps with the quality of life," she said. "It makes us healthier, it makes our city look better and it attracts more people and businesses."

Recycling has become more common in Tomball since the city hired Waste Corporation of America for its garbage services. WCA delivered new recycling bins to each Tomball home in September 2009, which seemed to spark interest in the community, said Julie Stafford, supervisor of utility billing.

"We've been having more people coming in and asking for recycling bins, too," she said. "We aren't sure how many people are actually using them, but there is an increase in the number we're giving out."

Recycling services are included in the monthly garbage bill that each Tomball resident pays, regardless of whether they recycle, Stafford said.

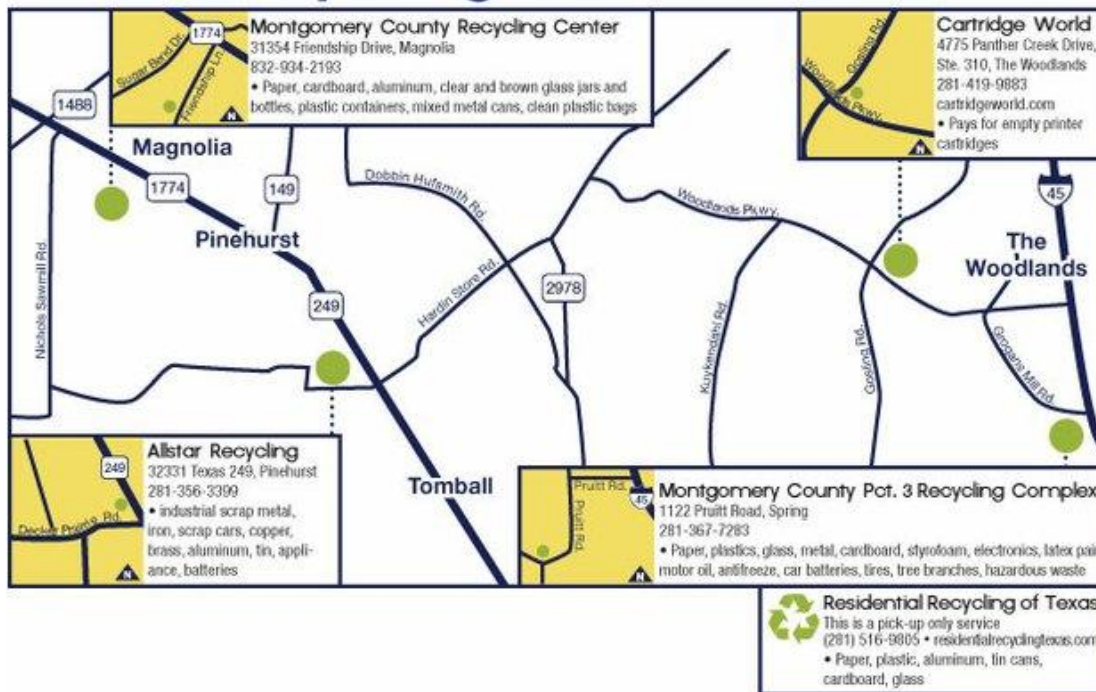
Magnolia residents receive recycling services from Waste Corporation of Texas. The company picks up recyclables on Fridays, and charges are included in the monthly bill.

Lone Star College System is testing its recycling pilot-program at the Kingwood and University Park campuses, which could be extended to the Tomball campus this fall, said Al Lewandowski, director of energy and sustainability at LSCS.

"We're working with students, faculty and our facility people to see how we can increase our recycling capabilities," he said. "If the pilot-program goes well, we expect to go system-wide." Lewandowski said there is no single solution to addressing environmental concerns, but he would like to see schools and communities interact to solve problems.

"If there's more of a collaborative effort, then you'll probably start coming up with more solutions to help with pollution, air and water quality, and other aspects of the environment that need to be addressed," he said.

# Area Recycling Services



## Recycling by the Numbers

**2.6%** The amount of waste in Houston that gets recycled. In contrast, the city of San Francisco recycles 69 percent of its waste.

**\$2.9** billion added to the Texas economy each year from the recycling industry. It employs about 20,000 workers state-wide.

**190** Landfills in the state of Texas in 2002. In 1990 there were 790.

**95%** Energy saved making a can from recycled aluminum instead of from raw materials.

**40%** Energy saved making paper from recycled materials instead of from trees.

**42** Gallons of crude oil saved by recycling and refining one gallon of used motor oil.

**23%** Energy saved producing new glass from recycled glass instead of from raw materials.



Source: Keep Texas Beautiful