



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **FAYETTE COUNTY RECYCLING WINS ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD**

**Uniontown, PA** – The Fayette County Recycling Program has officially won the 2022 Governor’s Award for Environmental Excellence.

Presented annually by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the awards highlight the best in environmental innovation and expertise statewide, providing recognition to businesses and organizations involved in a cross-section of environmental initiatives - from cleaning up watersheds, saving energy, eliminating pollution, reducing waste and more.

“Every year, the Environmental Excellence honorees show the creative and innovative ways we can improve our environment, and this year is no different,” Gov. Tom Wolf said. “The projects highlighted this year show tremendous diversity in how they are making Pennsylvania a better place.”

“It is always a privilege to spotlight people going above and beyond to improve the environment and make our great outdoor spaces more accessible,” DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell said. “Each of the projects awarded this year will leave a positive, lasting legacy for Pennsylvania.”

Fayette County Recycling Coordinator/Stormwater Manager Sheila Shea accepted the award during the Pennsylvania Environmental Council’s annual banquet in Harrisburg Tuesday. She said she’s “still processing” the win and her program’s success.

“I’m overwhelmed. I’m still kind of in shock, because I’m really just doing my job every day. I wanted to make an impact, but I had no idea that goal would lead me here,” Shea said. “I had a vision for a cleaner, greener Fayette County, but I never could have pictured this.”

Shea entered her position in 2017 with a plan to redesign the county’s recycling program and make it accessible to all citizens. In 2020, despite a global pandemic, Shea and the Fayette County Board of Commissioners moved forward to bring that plan to life.

The county currently has 34 drop-off recycling bins placed countywide and accepts an unprecedented variety of regular and hard-to-recycle items at its Fayette County Recycling Convenience Center, which only celebrated its one-year anniversary on Earth Day, April 22. Since kicking off the revamped program in September 2020, the program has collected more than 2 million lbs. (1,000 tons) of recyclable materials.

“This award brings such a mixture of emotions with it. I’m so proud to represent Fayette County and our recycling program,” Shea said. “I’m so grateful to our commissioners, state legislators and the DEP for their support and belief in our efforts. I’m thrilled to receive the Governor’s Award for Environmental Excellence and showcase one of the many incredible projects happening in our corner of the state.”

This is the second time the Fayette County Recycling Program has received a state environmental award. Fayette County Commissioner Vince Vicites, who founded the recycling program as the county's first recycling coordinator more than 30 years ago, said the first award came in the early 1990s, but with a different name.

"This is a great honor for Fayette County and our Recycling Coordinator Sheila Shea. Having won it twice speaks well to the level of participation and effort being put into our recycling program for the past 35 years," Vicites said. "These types of awards are a sense of accomplishment for everyone involved. This award will stand for a continued sense of pride and motivation to strive for excellence."

Commissioner Chairman Dave Lohr said he's "not surprised" to hear the program won, as Shea is "doing an outstanding job" in taking the program "to a level that few thought possible."

"As I always say, Fayette County is leading the way, on the cutting edge, setting the bar high - and others are looking to us for inspiration, vision and direction. When one of our county programs grows and thrives, the county benefits. Those benefits range from the tangible - more and better opportunities for recycling; to the intangible - recognition and well-deserved accolades for innovations," Lohr said. "Receiving that positive feedback; shining a positive light on Fayette County is what we need to promote and build this county as a desirable place to be; a place where businesses choose to be; a place where people choose to live and work. Well done, Sheila!"

Commissioner Scott Dunn said it's "rewarding" to see the hard work put into revamping the Fayette County Recycling Program receive recognition.

"We are getting the reputation regionally and statewide for being a leader in recycling," Dunn said. "It's great to see our citizens respond by using the bins and center so frequently."

The Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence is just the latest in a series of accolades for the Fayette County Recycling Program. In the last year, the program has been featured in Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania's Rural Recycling Study; selected for a feature episode on the national Good Government Show podcast; chosen to take over Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful's Fayette County affiliate, PA CleanWays; and much more.

Fayette County Community Relations Coordinator Kaylie Moore nominated the recycling program for the accolade, with strong support from regional DEP representatives Bill Jester and Sharon Svitec.

For more information about the Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence or the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, visit [www.dep.pa.gov](http://www.dep.pa.gov) or [www.pecpa.org](http://www.pecpa.org), respectively.

To learn more about the Fayette County Recycling Program, visit [www.Facebook.com/FayetteCoRecycling](https://www.Facebook.com/FayetteCoRecycling) or [www.fayettecountypa.org/242/Solid-Waste-Recycling-Stormwater](http://www.fayettecountypa.org/242/Solid-Waste-Recycling-Stormwater).

To learn more about Fayette County, visit [www.FayetteCountyPA.org](http://www.FayetteCountyPA.org).

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