MISSION

The mission of Eldorado285 Recycles is to encourage all residents of Eldorado and the Hwy. 285 corridor to reduce the amount of material they send to the landfill by practicing the “5 R’s:”

(1) Refusing to buy unneeded items,
(2) Reducing unnecessary packaging,
(3) Repairing whatever they can to extend its life,
(4) Reusing other people’s unwanted “stuff” in place of buying new. And
(5) Recycling or composting remaining materials whenever possible.

2020: Quite an Unusual Year

Many will remember 2020 as quite an unusual year due to the pandemic and the losses and hardships experienced by so many. Like many other organizations, many of our activities were scaled back due to health and safety concerns. Nevertheless, we continued to meet regularly throughout the year via zoom meetings, to keep up-to-date on community and national developments, advise and educate others about the value and need for recycling and reuse options, and plan activities for the new year. We look forward to 2021 as being much more a normal year for our activities.

YEARLY HIGHLIGHTS

- We passed the 200 mark and have now helped residents install 214 backyard worm compost systems.
- ZERO WASTE EVENTS: We helped Eldorado conduct its annual appreciation party for volunteers as a zero waste event. A zero waste event is one in which almost all items that would otherwise be thrown away as waste are reused. That is, food is collected and used for composting and other materials are recycled. We have a guide on our website that tells others hosting social events how to plan for and successfully conduct a zero waste event. Unfortunately, other community events that we usually help run as zero waste events were canceled due to the pandemic (i.e., the Fourth of July Pancake Breakfast, the Vista Grande Library August Ice Cream Social, the Annual Eldorado Fall Barbecue, and The Fall Fling and Studio Tour Reception).
- In March of 2020 we sponsored a public meeting around the topic of how to recycle correctly that was held at the Vista Grande Library and was well-attended.
- We began collecting and recycling used razor blades as another specialty collection at La Tienda.
ADMINISTRATION
● In 2020 Stephanie Levy and Karen Sweeney served as Co-Chairs, Taylor Ward as Treasurer, and Joe Durlak as Secretary. Until public meetings are once again safe, during 2021 we will hold our monthly meetings on ZOOM. These occur on the second Tuesday of every month, from 4-6 PM. If you are interested in joining us for any meeting and all are welcome, please email one of our NEW co-chairs for a zoom invitation (Andrew Rodney, andrewwoodnet@mac.com, or Libby Maclaren, libbymac3@icloud.com).
● Our website eldorado285recycles.org continued to attract attention from others. The total number of hits to our website during 2020 was 165,672. We recognize the importance of reaching out beyond the Eldorado/285 area so we work with Santa Fe City and County agencies and staff to improve their practices and educational efforts to encourage all residents in the county to practice the 5 R’s.

PROGRAMS
● ADVOCACY: Throughout 2020 we continued to be the leading advocates for recycling in the Santa Fe area. Our members participated in several local meetings such as those of the Eldorado Community Improvement Association (ECIA) Board; the Board of County Commissioners; the City Council, its Public Utilities Committee and its Sustainability Commission. In addition we met with the new operators of the Buckman Road Recycling and Transfer Station (BuRRT) recycling processing facility.

● COMPOSTING: Our “compost pile in every backyard” program in 2020 installed 21 new “straw bale worm-composting systems” in Eldorado and along the Hwy. 285 corridor bringing our total number of installed systems to 214. For this program we purchase straw bales, deliver them to the recipient, setup the system, seed it with worms, and train the new composters on how to maintain their new system. The cost for these systems to residents is nominal and yields substantial returns. We estimate that each backyard compost system diverts over 500 pounds of household waste from the landfill every year, and the compost is then used for gardening and other landscaping tasks at no cost to the resident.

● RECYCLING: In 2020 we continued to collect “hard-to-recycle” items at the La Tienda mall. The items included: used athletic shoes, #5 plastics, plastic writing instruments, bottle corks, rubber bands, dental care items, personal care and beauty items, Christmas string lights and electrical cords, and cold weather clothing (socks, hats, scarves, and gloves). We now also collect and recycle used razor blades. We also collected recyclables at our local senior center and from several Santa Fe dental offices.

● EDUCATION and OUTREACH: We have placed recycling information at the Vista Grande Library, the Senior Center, the Eldorado Convenience Center, La Tienda, and on the ECIA website for residents. We publish information on
recycling on our work in Vistas, the La Tienda Weekly newsletter, and NextDoor Eldorado. Is this all still relevant? In 2020 we continued our Eco Dog program in which we post periodic messages and answer questions about recycling on NextDoor.

- COMMUNITY: Spring and fall we participate in the county's "Adopt-A-Road" Program, and have adopted the heavily used section of Avenida Vista Grande, as our project. Twice yearly we walked on Vista Grande from Hwy.285 to Avenida Torreon, and collected all the trash along the roadside. This resulted in the collection of 11 large bags of litter removed from our local road.

  We have persuaded the ECIA to place recycling bins in its building and at its Dog Park and to install a water system in its meeting room (instead of using plastic water bottles) for the use of Board members and others using the facility.

- FUNDRAISING: Because we are a not-for-profit volunteer organization, we rely on the unpaid work of our volunteers, on money earned at a flea market with sale items donated by our members, and from our sponsorship and operation of Eldorado’s Fourth of July Pancake Breakfast in collaboration with La Tienda’s La Plancha Cafe.

- DOCUMENTING SOME OF OUR EFFORTS: It is difficult to quantify exactly how our spread of information and consulting efforts might influence individuals and organizations. However, we have tracked the success of several of our recycling collections and participation in zero waste events. For all the activities we could collect information on, we estimated that our efforts resulted in 540 lbs of material that was recycled and 107,000 lbs of material that was turned into compost. This amounts to a large amount of material that would otherwise go into our local landfill as waste. Instead, during 2020 it was transformed into new manufacturing items (through recycling) or to rich soil (as compost) for gardens, trees, and plants.

  Plus, our collection of athletic shoes and warm weather clothing which we either brought to local shelters (or for some athletic shoes to Goodwill for their program) resulted in 94 pairs of shoes, 297 pairs of socks, and 203 other pieces of winter clothing such as hats, scarves, gloves, and coats. We collected 91 lbs. of holiday lights that were taken to Capitol Scrap Metals for proper recycling. Otherwise, these lights become tanglers in the recycling stream and cause backups in processing.

  Despite the limitations due to the pandemic during 2020, our members stayed active. We estimate that our members collectively logged a total of over 700 hours which were devoted to one or more of our many activities.

- Finally, and sadly, in the latter part of 2020, we mourned the passing of one of our members, Marcia Spears-Cihon. Marcia’s friendship, character, initiative, and energy inspired many of our efforts. She will be missed.
PLANS FOR 2021

In general, we will continue our main activities that we have summarized above and will look for additional opportunities to encourage the "5 R's."

● COMPOSTING: Continued emphasis will be placed on backyard composting, the most effective and best energy-saving way of diverting fully 30% of a household's trash from the landfill.

● ZERO WASTE: As public events are once again begun, we will continue to help Eldorado organizations make their pancake breakfast, ice cream social, annual BBQ, and the Arts and Crafts Association zero waste events. ECIA staff has asked our assistance in planning more of their sponsored events as zero waste events, such as the annual Volunteer appreciation party. We wish to continue with the city of Santa Fe and other event sponsors to make their events zero waste as well. Per our input, ECIA now has a policy that all those hosting events using Eldorado facilities must recycle.

● SUPPORT and EDUCATION: We will work to make the City and County recycling activities successful and help in implementing the recycling required by the existing ordinance at all County convenience centers.

● We are planning activities to occur in April that will feature education about the problem of plastics. These activities will include a video and a panel presentation by local experts which will occur via zoom.

● We hope to expand the number of local schools who will participate in our dental collection program.

● RESTAURANT SURVEY We are planning a survey of local restaurants in the Eldorado area to discern their use of environmentally friendly dining ware and carry-out items in the hopes of helping each establishment use more compostable and recyclable materials. This survey was scheduled for 2020 but was postponed due to the pandemic.

We wish to thank all the organizations who worked with us to conduct zero waste events, all the individuals who recycle at home and have contributed to our special recycling collections, and all those now operating backyard composting systems.

IT DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE!