

## Lots and Lots of Land— Canyon, Texas

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**B**ecky Harp of Canyon, Texas, in the Northwest Texas Conference, attended EarthKeepers training in Fayetteville, Arkansas, in 2017. She has tried to convince her town to institute a recycling program for some time, but she needed new ideas about ways to approach the problem—especially help with networking and communication.

Becky's regional network, a small cohort of three other EarthKeepers, keeps in touch using social media and the phone. They gave her courage and motivation and some practical tips to keep moving forward with her project, the Canyon Recycling Center.

People who live in parts of the country where recycling is a matter of putting items on the curb once a week may have trouble understanding Becky's roadblocks. "We live in the Texas panhandle," she said, "and we have lots and lots of land. Many people think they don't need recycling—"throwing away is going away."

Becky met with the assistant city manager to talk about getting a recycling program off the ground, but the main center for recycling is in Dallas, 377 miles away. The town wanted to know where the recycled material would go and how much it would cost to get it there. The cost of sending trucks loaded with recyclables on a regular basis was not in the budget.

"I got knocked off my project for a while because I didn't have anyone to work with," said Becky. "In Amarillo, a town just a few miles away, there is a company that recycles cardboard,

but Canyon and the church still pay for the service. Our church, First United Methodist, pays less for the recycle bin than a trash bin, so we still save money. The city of Canyon saw the need and now we have two cardboard recycling containers, but the town needs more."

It's been a bit-by-bit process for Canyon recycling. Plastic, aluminum, and paper are the next items to tackle. The project is a multiyear effort, and Becky hopes to enlist some young adults in the church to

Meanwhile, Becky meets with church and community groups in the region to help them understand creation care and their role in it. She talks about actions people can take first to reduce waste—decrease the use of bottled water and take reusable water containers instead, use aluminum over plastic, and quit using Styrofoam cups and plates. ("That's been the hardest thing to get out of the churches!" says Becky.) Other tactics, such as xeriscaping—using native plants



Becky Harp of Canyon, Texas, shows off the cardboard recycling station in the First United Methodist Church parking lot.

PHOTO: WILEY HARP

help keep the pressure on the town managers. Becky notes: "I was so on fire when I came back from Mission U (United Methodist Women) and EarthKeepers training—and then I came home and realized not everyone has the same passion. The United Methodist Women group in our church is very supportive—and I look around and realize, we're doing more than we have ever done before. There is just so much more to do."

for the landscape so less water is needed to keep the grass alive—help too.

In January 2019, Becky will join fellow EarthKeeper Mel Caraway and many others at the state capitol in Austin. "I've learned how to get into a legislator's office, befriend the secretaries—that's what you have to do. I never thought it was important to show up and speak with representatives, but now I do."