

By Carolyn Lee
The Imperial Republican



A group of residents involved with WasteCap Nebraska, a project aimed at zero waste community education, last Friday began planning its opening steps in the campaign to educate the public about recycling and reusing items.

The purpose of the program is to help communities achieve “zero” in the amount of items deposited in landfills.

WasteCap Nebraska asked Imperial if it would be one of several communities in the state to participate in the program, because, as facilitator Chris Funk said, “You have a ‘pay as you throw’ policy which encourages recycling.”

She was referring to the fact that residents pay for each toter emptied, rather than paying a flat fee for trash pickup each month.

Funk said the payment for a toter pickup is not common in communities.

WasteCap wants to educate community leaders and the community about the zero waste concept. “We want to introduce the idea that you can significantly keep things out of landfills,” Funk stated. “At some point Nebraska will run out of landfills, plus there are a lot of toxins in landfills,” she added.

A survey shows that 41.15 percent of landfill trash is total paper fibers. Food accounts for 16.64 percent of the landfill, while plastics account for 19.13 percent of trash dumped.

As a first step toward educating the community concerning recycling, the WasteCap group is working with Chase County School organizations to conduct a door-to-door survey of Imperial residents this spring.

The survey will ask if a person recycles, what they recycle, would they be interested in recycling and would they support curbside recycling.

The WasteCap group is exploring the possibility of curbside recycle product pickup, as is done in larger cities.

Currently persons recycling products in Imperial take them to the recycling center on East Highway 6.

About 120 students will survey 1,000 households this spring. There will be some community education concerning the survey prior to the event.

In addition, WasteCap recently walked through several local businesses to determine how they recycle.

Funk said some are recycling some items, some are paying more than they need to for trash pickup and all indicated that recycling product pickup would make a difference.

She also floated the idea of a used computer pickup at some point.

City Administrator/Clerk Jo Leyland added that she would like to see a materials exchange set up between communities and residents in this area.

For instance, someone having extra wooden pallets could advertise the fact, and someone needing them could either pick them up for free or pay for them.

That way, those extra pallets wouldn’t be sent to the landfill or burned, adding toxins to the air.

Other communities participating in the WasteCap program are Broken Bow, Wayne and Cass

County.