

A new way to raise funds to enhance recycling

Richard McDonough* highlights the work of a new glass recycling organisation in the United States: The Glass Recycling Foundation

In many industries, there are times when competitors become colleagues. Though competition is still a critical part of their business, individuals and companies see great promise in working together on industry-wide issues.

Various players within the glass industry have been working together on the issue of recycling for several years through the Glass Recycling Coalition.

Missing from those collaborative efforts, though, has been steady funding that may benefit recycling within the glass industry overall.

Leaders from different parts of the glass industry recently decided to join together to solve that missing piece of the puzzle by creating the Glass Recycling Foundation. Manufacturers, recyclers, suppliers, purchasers, and others have founded this new non-profit organization.

According to its website, the mission of the Glass Recycling Foundation is “To promote the preservation of the environment through glass recycling through education, grant making and creating pilot programs for effective glass recycling working in collaboration with other trade organizations in the glass recycling value chain.”

“Our goal is to raise \$1 million during the next six to 12 months,” stated Ms. Laura Hennemann, Vice President of Marketing & Communications at Strategic Materials. She is also the Secretary of the Glass Recycling Foundation. Strategic Materials “processes recycled glass and plastic for use in a wide array of products, creating efficiencies for our customers while conserving earth’s natural resources,” according to the company’s website.

“With the initial funding secured, we anticipate reviewing and providing grants for glass recycling interventions



◀ Glass from a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) being delivered to Momentum Recycling in Utah in 2017. (Photograph is provided courtesy of Momentum Recycling.)

and demonstration projects,” Ms. Hennemann continued.

“At this point, we don’t have a specific list of projects we will fund,” explained Mr. Ron Holmes, Treasurer of the Glass Recycling Foundation as well as the Director North America, Packaging & Technology at Diageo. Diageo is a global leader in beverage alcohol with major operations in the United States.

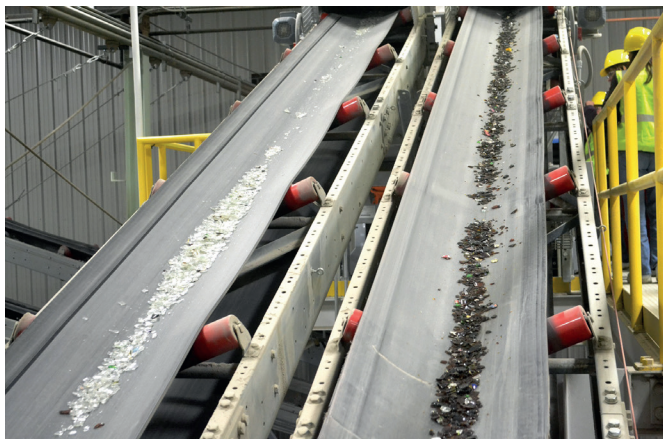
“We’re focusing on first raising funds,” continued Mr. Holmes. “We’re working with members of the Glass Recycling Coalition as well as others within the United States. We view the creation of the Glass Recycling Foundation to be a positive accomplishment. Collaboration works well within the glass industry and increases sustainability options. With glass recycling, we reduce landfill use, reduce energy needs, and reduce overall costs.”

One of the entities helping to create

this new non-profit organisation is another non-profit organisation active in a variety of recycling industries, including the glass recycling industry - The Recycling Partnership. According to its website, “As a leading, national force for improving recycling, The Recycling Partnership puts private dollars to work in communities because we know that when we invest in a system to protect resources, empower sustainable action and unlock opportunity, everyone wins.”

“There isn’t one solution that will work everywhere,” stated Ms. Stephanie Kersten-Johnston Director of Innovation at The Recycling Partnership. “But with donations in hand, the goal is to provide grants and other funding sources to increase glass recycling across the United States.” Ms. Kersten-Johnston is also serving as a member of the Board

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▲ Left and right: Pictured above is the Glass Optical Scanner in operation at the Rumpke Waste & Recycling Facility in Dayton, Ohio. Two Glass Conveyors are seen in the left photograph at the same facility. (Photographs are provided courtesy of Rumpke Waste & Recycling.)

of Directors of the Glass Recycling Foundation.

“In my prior role at Heineken, I was a funding representative on the Glass Recycling Coalition,” stated Ms. Kersten-Johnston. “I saw value in the establishment of the [Glass Recycling] Foundation as a fundraising arm and, despite changing roles/organizations, I was keen to remain active in the glass space specifically, so I accepted a role on the Foundation Board as a means to do so.”

Owens-Illinois (O-I) is also backing this new non-profit organisation.

“As a pioneer and leader in the glass packaging industry, it was only natural for O-I to be

involved with the Glass Recycling Foundation,” stated Mr. Jim Nordmeyer, Global Vice President, Sustainability at O-I. “The Glass Recycling Foundation will be instrumental in advocating and advancing recycling. There has never been a country-wide non-profit dedicated to projects focused on glass recycling. The Glass Recycling Foundation will give visibility and voice to those who are trying elevate grass root efforts and impact change.”

According to Mr. Nordmeyer, “O-I purchases more post-consumer recycled glass (cullet) than any other company in the world. We rely heavily on it in our operations.” Mr. Nordmeyer is a member of the Board of Directors of the Glass Recycling Foundation.

The potential to expand glass recycling within the United States is a goal that

many in the glass industry view as very feasible.

“Greater than 80% of the population want to recycle,” stated Mr. Nordmeyer. “Glass is made from three natural ingredients: sand, limestone and soda ash. It is reusable and recyclable. And it does not break down into harmful chemicals in the earth or oceans. Glass is all about the taste buds. Glass preserves products in their purest, most enjoyable form.”

Mr. John Lair, President and CEO of Momentum Recycling in Salt Lake City, Utah, concurred.

“Glass is one of the most recyclable of

the items in the waste stream,” stated Mr. Lair. “We need to make sure that glass continues to be collected and recycled, and we are pleased that the Glass Recycling Foundation will help ensure that this happens.”

While the specific projects that will be funded through the Glass Recycling Foundation are yet to be determined, the pros and cons of glass recycling are known by many within the industry.

“Using recycled glass conserves natural resources, reduces greenhouse gas emissions and lowers the amount of energy needed to melt the raw materials,” explained Mr. Nordmeyer of O-I. “In addition, glass recycling creates jobs across the value chain, and, at the end of the day, it is the responsible thing to do for our planet and future generations.”

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◀ Glass bottles made of recycled glass are utilised by Diageo throughout the world. (Photograph is provided courtesy of Diageo.)



▲ Glass bottles in the process of being manufactured by Owens-Illinois (O-I) at its facility in Brockway, Pennsylvania. (Photograph is provided courtesy of O-I.)

“Customers and consumers want responsible, meaningful packaging,” Mr. Nordmeyer continued. “This includes products that can be recycled, refilled and reused without harming the environment. Glass is the perfect packaging to accomplish this in the circular economy. [The] Glass Recycling Foundation will play a critical role in supporting glass recycling initiatives to keep glass out of landfills. We are seeing more communities, especially in the United States, taking glass out of curbside recycling bins. This is very short-sighted as the long-term benefits of glass recycling far outweigh the short-term challenges which boil down to economics.”

“Recycling in general is very local,” explained Mr. Nordmeyer. “The list of acceptable recycle items vary from state to state and even from community to community. There’s just no standard approach. A number of organisations provide educational materials and communications regarding acceptable materials; however, the current national average contamination (non-recyclables) in a single stream cart is 25%.”

Distance is a key challenge with glass recycling.

“Glass recycling works best when both the source of the cullet and the customer purchasing the cullet are within 200 to 300 miles of one another,” stated Mr. Holmes of Diageo. “Beyond that distance, glass recycling is not as viable today.”

The Recycling Partnership agrees with the assessments detailed by the officials with O-I and Diageo.

“Glass is suffering from some challenging contradictions,” stated Ms. Kersten-Johnston of The Recycling Partnership. “While being an endlessly recyclable material that is arguably a recycling icon in consumer minds, it’s a material that suffers from low popularity and investment in the recycling system because it’s heavy/challenging to transport, breaks easily (making it challenging to separate, and arguably causing contamination of other more valuable streams), and lacks end markets due to cheap and easy access to virgin materials. While there may be other pros and cons in the mix, many of which also affect other commodities, the essence of the challenges will typically come down to these limiting dynamics for glass.”

The leadership of the Glass Recycling Foundation hope to be able to fund interventions and demonstration projects that will emphasise the positive aspects of recycling glass and, at the same time, help to solve some of the challenges currently in place within the glass recycling industry.

“Those interested in further information on the Glass Recycling Foundation are encouraged to go to the website for the 501(c)(3) non-profit organization,” noted Ms. Hennemann of Strategic Materials. “We welcome support from all sectors of the glass industry and beyond.”

The website address for the non-profit organization is <https://www.glassrecyclingfoundation.org>.

Please note that in the United States, the term “501(c)(3) non-profit organization” generally means that contributions to these tax-exempt organizations are tax-deductible to donors under section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code. ■

Do you have questions about the glass industry?
Governmental regulations? Company operations?
Your questions may be answered in future news columns.
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