

WRN special edition: Iconic garbage truck

From WRN staff reports

No vehicle captures a child's awe and imagination like a garbage truck.

Yes, ice cream trucks bring treats, and fire trucks have the advantage of sirens and hoses, but only one beloved vehicle arrives every week – like clockwork – and delivers with it such size, such delightful noise and such trash-smashing power.

Although it's likely impossible to pinpoint the exact moment when the first savvy mechanic customized an early truck into a garbage-collection vehicle, most likely in his own garage, we know this much: 100 years ago, trucks modified for, and dedicated to, waste collection were starting to work the streets of America.



We can't let the anniversary pass without giving this iconic vehicle the celebration it truly deserves.

In October, Waste & Recycling News will publish a special "100 Years of the Garbage Truck" issue. In it, readers will trace 100 "stops" on the garbage truck's storied journey to cultural icon.

The issue promises to be a treasured keepsake for our industry, and we would like your help in putting it together.

What's your favorite garbage truck memory? Do you have a compelling truck story? What were the makes and models that became trusted partners in your livelihood? Who are the people in the industry, known and unknown, who played significant roles in the truck's development?

Photos, stories, memories, the names of the people we need to talk to and feature – we want them all.

Submit information at www.wasterecyclingnews.com/100years or contact WRN Editor John Campanelli at jcampanelli@crain.com with your ideas, suggestions and contributions.

To reserve your advertising space in this collector's issue, contact advertising director Linda Hickey at 330-865-6184 or lhickey@crain.com.

Film Biz Recycling does just that – finds uses for old props

By Vince Bond Jr.
WRN reporter

Receiving props from long-running crime series "Law & Order" may have rubbed off on the Film Biz Recycling staff.

Although the original show ended in 2010 after a two-decade run and gave way to several spin-offs, Film Biz workers are filling its void with their own detective work at the Gowanus, N.Y.-based reuse center, which accepts props from TV shows, commercials, theater productions and runway events that took place in New York.

Film Biz Recycling founder Eva Radke said employees like to investigate deliveries to determine what a production was about.

"We get everything from paint to high-end furniture, lighting fixtures, linoleum, rugs and yarn. It all depends on what the show is," said Radke, 40, who founded the business in 2008. "We do forensics."

The center, with nearly 90 tons collected this year, has received items from commercials for major companies like Target, JCPenney and the Westin hotel chain to sitcoms such as "30 Rock."

The nonprofit group doesn't charge for dropping off materials, and 60% of what comes in is redistributed to local charities. The rest is sold through its Prop Shop to fund the store, which Radke calls a "resale boutique."

The center also features the Re-Gallery that showcases work from artists, including some who work directly out of the center.

Radke said the artists get to use the shop space and materials while Film Biz receives a portion of their sales in a partnership where "everybody wins."

Tyagi Schwartz, founder of



Courtesy, Sean McCormack, Film Biz Recycling
Old props from television shows and commercials are stacked in Film Biz Recycling's Prop Shop in New York City. The props are either donated to charities or sold through the nonprofit organization's Prop Shop.

Dog Tag Designs, has operated out of Film Biz for nearly a year.

Schwartz up-cycles and repurposes objects, creating furnishings such as lamps and tables out of them. For example, he'll take an old fan or toy truck and use his electrical expertise to turn them into lamps.

He marks his creations with dog tags bearing when and where they were created to give them a sense of history.

The repurposing business is gaining steam during a stagnant economy, he said.

"I think people are starting to look at things a little differently," Schwartz said. "I think now, people are aware of not wasting money and saving. I think that could be part of the gain in popularity."

For 15 years, Radke worked in the entertainment industry as an art production coordinator on movies and commercials, includ-

ing Cambell's Soup ads and the film "Flight 93."

After projects wrapped, it was Radke's job to call dumpster companies or find new homes for the props.

Radke's time in the business exposed her to the industry's wasteful tendencies, and she said it helped her realize there was a need for an outlet that made use of props.

Before starting Film Biz, Radke formed a Google group in 2007 that served as a forum for her and around 30 colleagues that allowed them to tell each other what they had left over after productions.

"Waste can create green jobs, save neighbors money and help the industry reduce their footprint," she said. "Instead of throwing it all into a dumpster, it comes here and creates opportunities. It's not waste, it's an opportunity. You can do something with it."

Radke said she cringes when she thinks that most of the quirky props and vintage pieces in the 11,000-square-foot warehouse would have ended up in a landfill.

Film Biz is located just blocks from the Gowanus Canal superfund site, but Radke said a revolution is underway in a place that is riddled with "toxic areas" and "tons of brown fields" as the new economy takes shape.

"I think the model we built here is an integral part to the new economy. We have to look at what we're doing and what we're throwing away. It's not the planet we're saving, it's us," Radke said. "We need to use the resources we have on hand. That's not political, that's smart." ■

Contact Waste & Recycling News reporter Vince Bond Jr. at vbond@crain.com or 313-446-1653.

RECYCLING BRIEFS

Seattle OKs plastic bag ban, paper fee

Seattle's City Council approved a plastic bag ban on Dec. 19. The ordinance will take effect July 1, according to the Seattle Times.

The measure was backed by the Northwest Grocery Association, which represents the state's largest supermarkets, including Safeway, Fred Meyer, QFC and Albertsons.

The ordinance also adds a nickel fee on paper grocery bags to make up for the higher cost of paper and to remind shoppers to bring reusable bags, the paper reported.

Christmas tree reuse aids marine life

The Riverside County (Calif.) Waste Management Department and the California Department of Fish and Game are collecting holiday trees at county landfills and will provide them for fish habitat, the Press-Enterprise in Riverside reported.

The Department of Fish and Game will use the trees in local lakes and waterways to create protective habitat for small juvenile fish from larger predatory fish, the newspaper said.

ReCommunity opens single-stream plant

The ReCommunity Detroit Material Recovery Facility was recently upgraded to a single-stream system.

The fully-automated facility will create 65 jobs and make recycling simpler for residents, who can now put all of their recyclables in one bin. ■

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