

# Akron's Hazardous Solution

It's not glamorous, but Akron is the proud owner of Ohio's first small-business hazardous waste recycling center.

Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic launched BizMat in late October as a two-year pilot project between the city and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency to serve Summit and Cuyahoga counties.

"We went to the private sector and asked them if they were going to be upset that we were taking their business," says Jeff Wilhite, the city of Akron's deputy planning director and BizMat project chairman.

"Their answer to us was 'no.' We're creating a niche that they never were able to get to."

BizMat offers small businesses a low-cost, environmentally friendly program to recycle hazardous materials such as old paints, fertilizers, fluorescent bulbs, computers, caulking, etc. One of the program's goals was to recycle at least 60 percent of the waste. So far, the facility has been able to recycle 85 percent of it, Wilhite says.

The cost of properly managing the materials is out of reach to most businesses, so they store hazardous waste

on-site, which is dangerous. Waste disposal via a drain or on the ground

can contaminate ground water, resulting in a health risk and legal liability. Other businesses may try to dispose of it as trash that ends up in a landfill, which is against the law.

Small businesses are defined as those that generate 220 pounds or less of hazardous waste per month. Classified as "conditionally exempt small quantity generators" by EPA regulation,

businesses in this category make up 70 percent of the hazardous waste generated today.

BizMat charges \$95 for the first 220 pounds of waste and \$1 for each additional pound.

The Ohio EPA is exempting BizMat from the standard permitting requirements. A similar facility is in the works for the city of Cleveland, Wilhite says.

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Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic

# For the Good

While volunteering at one of the Legal Aid Society's free clinics this summer, Hugh McKay realized a great need for legal services for the poor.

McKay, partner-in-charge of the Cleveland office of Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP, won't soon forget the woman who told him she never had anyone in the legal system listen to her.

"It's just a gaping hole in our system that Legal Aid is trying to fill," says McKay, president-elect of the Cleveland Bar Association. "We need more help. That came through loud and clear."

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland has a long history of providing much-needed legal service to the poor in this community. The 100-year-old nonprofit provides free legal assistance to low-income families in Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake and Lorain Counties.

In an effort to expand its services, Legal Aid began the Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) in January to encourage local attorneys to give their time and talents off the clock. Since then, more than 200 local attorneys and more than 100 law students have participated in the VLP and



Stephanie Jackson of Legal Aid and Hugh McKay of Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP

have served nearly 500 people.

The VLP consists of bi-monthly free Saturday clinics, one each on the east and west sides of Cleveland, and a once-a-month Wednesday evening clinic. Each Saturday clinic is sponsored by a particular law firm or legal organization and gives

residents a chance to ask questions and receive free legal advice. During the Wednesday evening clinics, held at Legal Aid's office downtown, attendees are paired with a volunteer attorney who oversees the case and works on it until resolved.

— SARA LEPRO