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Recyclables are loaded at metering bins at Republic Services' recycling center in North Las Vegas. L.E. Baskow Las Vegas Review-Journal @Left_Eye_Images

Recycling rate falls

Drop follows adoption of 'single-stream' programs in county

By Mya Constantino
Las Vegas Review-Journal

WHEN the first city in Clark County was introduced to single-stream recycling in 2012, advocates hoped for a robust program that would increase recycling rates and efficiency. But through the years, as other cities adopted the new approach, the county's rates failed to grow as expected. In 2012 — the year North Las Vegas introduced single-stream recycling, in which all recyclables

Reduce and reuse
Recycling manager takes the reuse of items, composting to another level
▶ Page 11B

are placed in a single, 96-gallon cart — the county's recycling rate was at its highest at 27.5 percent. By 2019, the latest year for which data is available from the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, the rate had dropped to below 20 percent.

"Single-stream recycling was never going to work," said Steve Kalish, president and CEO of Waste Logistics Inc. "Back then, no one on the committee wanted to hear the reality that single-stream recycling wasn't going to work."

What is recyclable



Recycling tips
Visit [Earth911.com](https://www.earth911.com) to learn where to take items for recycling.

In 2008, Kalish sat on the Clark County Recycling Advisory Committee, which reviewed community support for and opposition to the recycling program. It also reviewed recycling rates and costs. The recycling rates represent the percentage of discarded materials that are diverted from the landfill.

North Las Vegas was the first city in the county to approve single-stream recycling for single-family homes, followed by unincorporated Clark County and Henderson in 2013, and Las Vegas in 2016. By 2018, all four areas had implemented the program.

Previously, residents sorted their recyclables into small red, white and blue bins. Their trash was picked up twice a week, while their

See **RECYCLE 10B**

Personal message shared in Assembly

Reno lawmaker IDs as pansexual

By Colton Lochhead
and Bill Dentzer
Review-Journal Capital Bureau

CARSON CITY — With the legislative session nearly half-way over, lawmakers in Carson City last week continued their bill introduction spree,

CARSON CITY JOURNAL

including legislation on safe injection sites, another push to abolish the death penalty and more.

But the week that was featured more than just a bevy of bill introductions.

On Thursday, Assemblywoman Sarah Peters, D-Reno, took to the Assembly floor with a very personal message, publicly announcing that she was pansexual. People who identify as pansexual are attracted to people of all sexes and genders.

Peters said in an interview Friday that she hasn't considered herself to be closeted about her sexuality, but said she wasn't sure if it was her place to speak on it in part because she is in a hetero-normative relationship with a husband and children. But she realized that she could use her voice and public position to help support others in the LGBTQ community, she said.

"I have so many friends in the queer community who feel like their identities limit them from their expression of self in the public," Peters said. "And as a lawmaker, someone who is in the public eye, it was an opportunity to come out and support those communities who feel like they're underrepresented or don't have somebody to look at and say 'Hey, I can do that too.'"

"Yesterday, saying it out loud, in a very public forum that was recorded into history, there was liberation in

See **CARSON CITY 7B**

Parents arrested in death of boy with multiple injuries

By Katelyn Newberg
Las Vegas Review-Journal

Isaiah Gritz's parents told Las Vegas police the 8-year-old boy had tried to drown himself, but paramedics rushing him to a hospital found a head wound so big that they initially "believed it to be a gunshot wound," according to an arrest report.

The boy died at University Medical Center on

March 20 after his father called police about 2 a.m. to report his son had tried to kill himself at the family's home on the 2000 block of North Torrey Pines Drive, near West Lake Mead Boulevard, the Metropolitan Police Department said. Investigators would later find injuries covering Isaiah's body, according to arrest reports for his parents.

The boy's father, Leon Gritz, 27, and mother,



Isaiah Gritz

Christina Gritz, 28, were arrested March 20 and have been charged with first-degree murder and child abuse or neglect resulting in substantial bodily or mental harm, court records show.

Isaiah's grandmother, Rachel Gritz, said during a



Christina Gritz



Leon Gritz

phone interview Wednesday that Isaiah's parents told her they were still living in Sacramento, California, where she said multiple Child

Protective Services reports have been filed against them.

She now believes the two fled Sacramento because of some of the reports, which she said were made by neighbors alleging domestic violence. Rachel Gritz also reported her son and his wife to child services after witnessing the couple fight, but she never saw signs of physical abuse toward Isaiah

See **ABUSE 7B**

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Continued from Page 1B

recyclables were collected every other week.

Under the new system, trash and recycling bins are picked up curbside once a week. That meant eliminating a second trash pickup each week.

"People started throwing their trash into their recycling bin since they only had one trash pickup day," Kalish said. "Households of four or more people can't survive off of two carts."

Susan Brager, a former commissioner who approved the plan in 2013, said she had hoped for a different outcome.

"I was against it at first, but then the pilot program began in my neighborhood, and I saw that it worked," she said recently. "I knew it would be hard to monitor, but I was hopeful at the time."

According to Rachel Lewison, Southern Nevada recycling coordinator at the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, in 1991 the state Legislature adopted a recycling goal of 25 percent.

The most recent data from the Environmental Protection Agency shows that in 2019, Nevada had a 21.7 percent recycling rate, below the national average of 32.1 percent.

Despite Clark County's reduced recycling rate, Jeremy Walters, the sustainability expert at Republic Services of Southern Nevada — which sorts the county's recyclables — said he is hopeful.

"There's always work to be done, but I believe we're on the right track," Walters said.

He noted that since the implementation of single-stream recycling, the company has seen a 400 percent increase in participation valley-wide. But Tara Pike, solid waste and recycling manager at UNLV, said more participation creates a higher risk of contaminated recyclables.

Contamination rate

In Southern Nevada, the contamination rate stands at 30 percent compared with the 17 percent national average, according to a Recycling Partnership 2019 State of Curbside Survey.

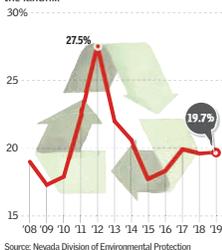
For example, Walters said, when



I.E. Baskow Las Vegas Review-Journal @Left_Eye_Images
Workers pull out nonrecyclable materials at the Republic Services recycling center in North Las Vegas.

Clark County's recycling rate

The rate represents the percentage of discarded materials that are diverted from the landfill.



people throw in a wet milk carton, that milk could spill onto clean cardboard or paper. Those items then are no longer recyclable and end up in the landfill.

When it comes to contamination rates, experts say several variables come into play.

See RECYCLE 11B

Where to drop off recyclables



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Waste not before it gets to recycling bins

Las Vegas woman committed to reuse

By Mya Constantino
Las Vegas Review-Journal

"Reduce, reuse, recycle." We've all heard it. And sometimes, the tips we need to be more sustainable are right in front of us, said Jeremy Walters, the sustainability expert at Republic Services of Southern Nevada.

The instructions are listed in order of importance. "Recycling is profoundly important for sustainability, but it's your last line of defense," Walters said. "We want to reuse our items as often as we can before we throw them into our recycling bins."

One Las Vegas woman, Tara Pike, said she takes "reuse" to another level.

Pike, a recycling manager at UNLV, started her recycling journey 29 years ago. On a recent day at her 2½-acre farm, pigs sat out to sunbathe while spotted goats roamed around.

A tractor in her backyard shoveled compost from her 15-yard pile — a mix of her cow's poop, banana peels from her kitchen, bruised apples and spinach straight from a produce donation box she picks up from a store near her, pieces of cardboard and hay.

Then, it sits for a while. A 30- to 60-day process, she said, depending on the items she adds to the pile.

Her compost gets laid onto an open field, a field meant for growing veg-

etables to feed her animals and the community.

"I've had a pile for over a year once," Pike told the Las Vegas Review-Journal as she sifted through a donation box brimming with bruised apples and broken-up lettuce. "If you keep adding to it, it'll keep composting."

In Pike's world, almost anything can be reused.

Inside her greenhouse out back are hundreds of clean brown bottles that Pike saved from the landfill. She plans to use the bottles for craft projects for fundraisers to support farm animal rescue groups in Las Vegas.

"It's a waste to recycle a brand new bottle," Pike said. "Recycling bottles is energy intensive."

She said all it takes is paying closer attention to items we already use in our day-to-day lives.

"Try to think about how you can reuse what you already have," Pike said as she picked up one of her reused orange juice bottles that she fills with lemonade.

Pike reuses the tops of the powdered lemonade containers as measuring cups to feed her animals and also as bowls for food for chickens. She even skips the paper towels and uses rags for cleaning until they're completely worn out.

"People think that recycling is all you need to do for the environment, but that's not true," Pike said. "Just because you're a recycler, doesn't mean you're an environmentalist."

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Rachel Aston Las Vegas Review-Journal @rookie_rae
Tara Pike, founder of All Friends Animal Sanctuary and a recycling manager at UNLV, pets Brandy Cookie Bear at the sanctuary behind her Las Vegas home.

How to compost

Select a shady spot for your compost pile or bin. Add brown and green materials in layers with no large pieces. Add water as you add materials — not too moist or dry. A wet and dry balance is key.

Browns

Dead leaves, branches, sawdust, coffee filters, paper, cardboard, nut shells

Compost pile

Allow it to sit and heat up

Greens

Grass clippings, leaves, fruit and vegetable scraps, tea, coffee grounds



Source: EPA

Wes Rand Las Vegas Review-Journal

▶ RECYCLE

Continued from Page 10B

"It comes down to education," Lewison said.

Walters said the newness of Clark County's recycling program, and tourists traveling into Las Vegas from areas with various recycling policies, are a couple of factors to consider.

"It's a very transient city," he said. "There are people visiting from

different places who may not have formalized recycling programs."

Patty Moen, Northern Nevada recycling coordinator at the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, said people started getting confused after single-stream recycling was introduced.

"Throwing everything in your bin doesn't mean the entire bin will get recycled and sorted through," she said.

'Wish-cyclers'

Experts say "wish-cycling," also

known as aspirational recycling, can affect recycling rates.

"Don't be a 'wish-cycler' — simply throwing an item in if you're unsure it's recyclable or not, hoping it'll get recycled," Walters said. "You're creating more harm than good. This needs to change."

Some people will throw last year's Christmas decorations into their recycling cart and not think twice about what happens next.

"Use your imagination; we've seen it all," Walters said. "There's the bowling balls, the car parts,

soccer balls, mannequins, firearms, lamps, animals and wigs, to name a few of the strangest."

Brager said residents have grown complacent.

"We need to boost education in our community and give people a nudge about our program constantly if we want to see our rates increase," she said.

Contact Mya Constantino at mconstantino@reviewjournal.com. Follow @searchingformya on Twitter.

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