

Recycling facility ramps up

Company's plant at city landfill recently started full operations

12:38 AM CST on Wednesday, November 16, 2011

By **Karina Ramírez** / Staff Writer

Twelve minutes into his address Tuesday, Myles Cohen, president of Pratt Industries' recycling division, wanted to explain the importance of recycling and natural resources.

Pratt Industries employees separate non-fiber materials on a conveyor belt Tuesday. The company's materials recovery facility recently started full operations at its site at the Denton landfill.

"For every ton of paper that we recycle, we save 17 trees, so for this facility ... we would save about 120,000 trees a month," he said. "Could you believe that?"

A toddler blurted out a surprising "Wow!" and guests broke into laughter.

"You are the future of recycling," Cohen said.

Cohen and representatives from the city of Denton, the City Council, Keep Denton Beautiful, the Denton Chamber of Commerce and other officials had joined to celebrate the grand opening of Pratt's materials recovery facility at the city landfill site on Mayhill Road.

The event included a brief tour of the facility, refreshments and a special recognition of Ryan Elementary School, the winner of the Keep America Beautiful Recycle Bowl Competition.

The grand-opening festivities were held on America Recycles Day, a nationally recognized day dedicated to the promotion of recycling.

The facility opened in March 2010, but was not fully operational until recently.

"For me, this is truly a dream come true, and it is a culmination of many years of work and planning from the city of Denton and the Denton Solid Waste Department," said Shirlene Sitton, the city's recycling division manager.

In 2007, Denton signed a 20-year agreement with Georgia-based Pratt Industries, a privately owned paper and packaging company, to bring a regional materials recovery facility to the city. The partnership brought a 40,000-square-foot "single-stream" recycling facility — which accepts materials mixed together for collection — to Denton last year.

Pratt Industries employees load materials on a conveyor belt to be separated for recycling Tuesday in the company's plant on Mayhill Road.

With machinery and people sorting Denton's curbside and commercial recycling materials into categories for shipment, it's no longer necessary for such materials to be hauled to other locations around North Texas.

Pratt Industries is America's sixth-largest paper and packaging company, producing more than 1 million tons of 100 percent recycled paper every year, according to the company. The Denton plant is one of Pratt's 10 recycling facilities dedicated to recycling a variety of materials for use in the production of the company's 100 percent recycled cardboard and paper products. The Denton facility now has 30 employees.

According to Cohen, the Denton plant is presently using only 25 percent of its total capacity.

Cohen and other attendees at the grand opening called for more businesses to participate in the recycling efforts.

"We do individual recycling pretty well, but it's the other — the business and multifamily — that we do not do very well," Mayor Mark Burroughs said after a ribbon-cutting ceremony. "It should be our next challenge."

Burroughs said part of the challenge for businesses is dealing with the liability of having to pay a penalty when others misuse the recycling bin and deposit non-recyclable items. He said getting business commitment is difficult.

"The liability statement says that if someone throws non-recyclable things above a certain amount into the bin, you have to pay to remove it. That is a practical reality," he said. "I am not sure how to quite avoid that, but there has to be creative minds involved and a commitment by the individual businesses."

KARINA RAMÍREZ can be reached at 940-566-6878. Her e-mail address is kramirez@dentonrc.com.