

Our friend, Marion Orton, was an educator, a visionary, and a tenacious, brave, kind, and determined leader. She taught a lot of us how to impact public policy, especially on environmental issues. In 1971, she had already served on the City of Fayetteville Board of Directors so she was quite savvy about the needs of this community and its potential to commit to environmentally sound waste management while being a steward of the city's resources. While Marion made an impact locally, she was a very global thinker and made impacts far beyond the city limits of Fayetteville, Arkansas.

As the citizens of Fayetteville pondered the ideas of recycling and reclaiming waste products, the League of Women Voters of Washington County studied with Marion. A comment from League member, Gene Tweraser is "My only thought is that I had never heard of recycling till Marion began talking about it. I had always re-used things like aluminum foil, boxes and bottles, but was glad to learn that it was a positive thing to do to help the environment."

Working with a sub-committee of the city of Fayetteville's Pollution Control Committee, Marion took the lead in establishing a recycling center, which opened on West Street in October of 1971. There was also a newspaper collection substation at Butterfield Trail School. Martha Agee of Uptown School, remembers:

"Not long after Uptown School, Fayetteville's first alternative school, began in the fall of 1972 Marion Orton and her helpers opened the first recycling center in an old building located behind or where the back part of the Walton Art Center is now located, she came to Uptown and talked to the students and staff members.

She told us about the startup program and what she and others hoped to accomplish by opening the recycling center. She asked if some of the students could find time to volunteer there. Several did, sometimes on their lunch hour or during a study period. Others were curious about what they were doing and many of them helped spread the word in the community."

Marion's neighbor and friend, Ethel Simpson, recalled: "My sons and I participated in Marion's first effort at community recycling, one summer in the early 1970s. Mike and Chris spent some time at the Center, which was along West Avenue, I think, in an old factory warehouse building. They sorted out bottles from other stuff.

League member, Libby Wheeler, remembers Marion saying that so many of the volunteers were young people - and that they really enjoyed smashing the glass bottles.

Marion's friend, Elizabeth Reagan, reported that she put her kids in the car and they all went to volunteer at the recycling center. She said it was staffed by all volunteers, and it didn't always smell so good.

We know that Marion was on a path to improve the quality of life in Fayetteville. She volunteered hours of her time to keep the center open and functioning and used this time to educate citizen after citizen, child after child. She absolutely loved it and was re-elected to the City Board of Directors in 1972. The result of her first efforts were reported as follows:
NWAR Times – February 24, 1972 Ninety days of recycling in Fayetteville is less than 1% effective - 90 days collection results in the recycling of approximately one day's solid waste. Its chief value is focusing attention on the idea of recycling."

Grapevine - November 3, 1971 On the recycling project: "The purpose of the project is to show the public that the public is wasteful."

The overall goal was to reduce the amount of waste that went into our landfills (does this not sound like our present day goal?) and Marion taught us all that education was the key. Her neighborhood even benefited in an exceptional way with a recycled materials pick up staffed by children in the neighborhood.

Well, Marion got the Washington County League engaged and we arrived at a consensus in 1972 that recycling was good for the community. The League of Women Voters of the United States followed suit shortly thereafter. Marion thought big and was part of the larger picture along with quite a team of women in Fayetteville Arkansas who tackled community issues with vigor!

In October 1973, LWVAR received a grant for \$4,225 from the National LWV Education fund and the Environmental Protection Agency to be used for better management of solid waste disposal in Arkansas. The state League proceeded to survey every county in Arkansas. Now, a survey to Marion was going out and interviewing community leaders and using this format to educate them on the possibilities of change, including recycling. The survey was accomplished with leaders like Peg Anderson, Sylvia Swartz and Marion with a published report which ended with this conclusion: "Separate trash and take recyclables to a recycling center. Buy beverages in returnable bottles and refuse to purchase over packaged items. Take a reusable shopping bag to the supermarket. Donate second hand items. Compost food and plant wastes. As federal regulations regarding solid waste disposal become more stringent, cities are going to have to do more. But, the study says, in the final analysis it is up to each individual to do his part." Sound familiar? This was 1973!

As Mayor, Marion Orton did her part as an individual, as a good citizen and as a believer that even young children could make a difference and contribute to improving the environment.

Today, Marion would approve of this Recycling Center, with or without her name on it. I know she would be knocking on every door in this neighborhood, talking kindly with each individual,

teaching recycling to young and old and carrying out her mission to cherish our environment and our city.

Every individual who uses the Marion Orton Recycling Center honors the wonderful legacy of our friend, Marion Orton

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Mary Alice Serafini

Marion Orton Recycling Center

Fayetteville, AR