

CenLa FOCUS



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in this
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Paddles Up!



Rock Out
with Dallas
String Quartet





CENTRAL LOUISIANA
Glass Act
 THE ART OF RECYCLING

The inspiration for Glass Act came in January 2021 when founder Annie Collins learned of two intrepid Tulane students doing “magic work” down in New Orleans. Determined to have a face to face meeting, and despite the challenges of COVID, she invited the pair to Cenla for a dinner party, a stay at the Hotel Bentley, and the chance to make a presentation on their project to the Alexandria Rotary Club. The students gave a fantastic presentation via Zoom about the glass recycling project they’d begun in New Orleans that has blossomed into a resounding success. “I was enthralled, intrigued, and annoyed that kids under 30 could do this in their backyard and we don’t have something in Alexandria,” recalls Annie. “If they can do it, we can do it!” And so, the idea for Glass Act was born.

of the products that we easily know how to do something with,” she continues. “It can be made into something else. The amount of glass that goes into a landfill is extraordinary and it is not necessary.” In fact, on average, we throw away 4.5 pounds of glass per person, per day. That’s enough to fill a large skyscraper every month!

After touring the New Orleans operation with Alexandria City Council member Catherine Davidson, Annie has assembled a team of dedicated board members and volunteers. “I’ve had a loyal supporting board, past and present, that I could not do without,” boasts Annie. “They’ve guided me and kept me on track.” Among those local volunteers are Paul Carpenter, Gerald Huffman of Syzmic, Trayce Snow, Shelley Jinks-Johnson, Sara Hopper, Rae Rae Antoon, Campbell Oas, Eliza Theus, and Evelyn Jones—Annie’s “fabulous sidekick”. Evelyn is excited about the difference Glass Act can make for our community and in the world. “Glass Act was born, almost single handedly, out of concern for our environment,” she explains. “This grassroots effort that’s taken over a year to formalize is here for our community and we should all do our part.” Rotarians, inspired by the original presentation, generously stepped up to provide some of the initial funding to launch the local project.



“Glass is not trash!” Her passion is evident as Annie works to change the way we all look at the glass that, all too often, is sent by the ton to landfills every day. In fact, the glass that ends up in landfills stays there for a million years. “That’s why we see so much glass in ancient countries like Greece and Turkey,” explains Annie. “It’s heavy; it’s bulky; and it goes nowhere.” The problem is a big one, and Glass Act is dedicated to playing its part in the solution. “The good news is that glass is one





The vision for Glass Act includes a full circle recycling center, meaning that the glass that comes in is recycled inside the facility, which distinguishes Glass Act from a simple collection site. “We’re going to do something with it; not just hold it,” Annie explains. Today, the energy saved from recycling one glass bottle can run a 100-watt light bulb for four hours or a compact fluorescent bulb for 20 hours. It also causes 20% less air pollution and 50% less water pollution than when a new bottle is made from raw materials. The process begins with the collection of FDA approved, food-safe glass, collected from area businesses, restaurants, bars, and community members each Friday and Saturday, from 10:00am to 2:00pm at Glass Act’s dedicated recycling center, located at 5215 Leo Street in Alexandria, right behind Walk-On’s Bistreaux.



On donation days, volunteers are on hand to help unload, sort, weigh, and process glass donations. The sorting process is critical and begins at the point of donation. Glass is manufactured using sand, known by its scientific name “silica dioxide”, from two distinct groups of silica—crystalline and amorphous. Crystalline silica in the form of quartz has long-term health risks and can lead to silicosis and other

respiratory diseases when crushed or pulverized. The World Health Organization classifies crystalline silica as carcinogenic to any animal or human. However, food-grade glass dust is classified as amorphous silica dioxide. This type of silica poses no health risks. “This includes wine and beer bottles, juice and milk bottles, jelly jars, canning jars, mayonnaise jars, and other glass containers that food comes in,” explains Annie. Types of glass that are not suitable for this kind of recycling are: window panes, ovenware, Pyrex, crystal, light bulbs, candlesticks, pottery, dishes, industrial glass such as a trays from a microwave oven. These types of glass require a separate recycling process.



Once collected, sorted, and weighed, the food-grade glass is prepared for crushing—or technically, pulverizing. To start, a single bottle crusher was donated by Embers Restaurant. The main purpose for this kind of crusher is to reduce volume and is now primarily used for pop-up events and educational demonstrations, serving a valuable proof-of-concept role for the organization. The larger scale crushing operation will begin later this summer, with the arrival of Glass Act’s first commercial pulverizer. Ordered on Valentine’s Day of this year with funding provided by Red River Bank, the model 1500C Glass Pulverizer will automate the crushing process and enable the recycling of up to 1,500 pounds of glass per hour! Volunteers will load sorted bottles into the machine’s hopper, where the conveyor-fed crusher will transport and



pulverize the glass, even separating out labels and other debris automatically. “We’re hopeful to have it up and running by June or July of this year,” Annie explains. “We’re currently stockpiling for the arrival of our big crusher.” That stockpile already weighs in at an impressive two-and-a-half tons and grows by the week!

Once processing begins, the recycled glass emerges in two forms—cullet and sand—in about equal proportions. Cullet is comprised of chips of glass that you might recognize from their use in fire pits, as aquarium substrate, or in terrazzo flooring and countertops. In addition to its commercial uses, cullet can also be used in various artistic media. Cullet pieces vary from about 1/8” to 3/8”, and once processed, no longer contain sharp edges.

The second form returns the glass to its most basic form—sand. The resulting sand is then further sifted into five different grades. The more coarse sand is used a variety of construction purposes, in sandbags, for swimming filtration, etc. The finest sand is nearly a powder and is ideally suited for sandblasting. “There are a lot of uses for sandblasting,” explains Annie. “It’s used to remove paint from old cars and BBQ pits and even for etching tombstones.”

Rounding out the recycling full circle will be the opportunity for municipal, commercial, and residential customers to buy the recycled cullet and various grades of sand directly from the Glass Act recycling center. The funds raised through the sale of the recycled glass will enable the future operation and expansion of the center.



“Our future vision includes an education center and a glass arts studio,” Annie enthuses. “Not all glass can go in the crusher, but it can be melted, recycled and/



or repurposed.” In addition to glass being crushed into sand and cullet, it can also be “slumped” and “fused”. Glass slumping uses gravity and high heat to shape glass using molds. The slumping process is commonly used to create bowls, platters, and art glass, but the limits are truly bound only by the artist’s imagination. Glass fusing is the process by which different forms and colors of glass are bonded through heat in a kiln, with many different potential uses in a modern studio art. At the proposed on-site glass studio, artists will be able to produce glass beads, Mardi Gras beads, glass pendants for jewelry, blown glass glassware and tableware, glass coasters, Christmas ornaments and much more! Visiting artists will be able to come in, working along with resident artists, to create products for sale and to teach classes for the public.

Education is vitally important to the mission of Glass Act. In the middle of all the action will be the Looking Glass Educational Center. Standing on center stage, visitors will be able to oversee the entire recycling circle, from start to finish. It will include educational videos, the single bottle crusher to watch how the process works, and to learn how the work of Glass Act impacts the greater world. “Glass Act was born, almost single handedly, out of concern for our environment,” explains Evelyn. “How we embrace this now will greatly impact many generations to come—either positively or negatively.”

There are a number of ways that community members can get involved with the mission and work of Glass Act. The first is to begin collecting and donating food-grade glass bottles instead of throwing them in the trash. “Saving all the glass you use at your home or place of business is easy once you make it a habit,” says Evelyn. Making it even easier, you don’t need to remove labels from your donated bottles. Each Friday and Saturday, volunteers will be on hand at Glass Act from 10:00am to 2:00pm to make the donation process as simple and seamless as possible. “To make it even easier, Glass Act will offer regular pick up for a small donation in the future,” Evelyn explains. “It’s important and it’s a no-brainer!”

Another great way to get involved is to volunteer directly on donation days at Glass Act. “We want to make it super easy,” says Annie. “We’re open both during a weekday (Friday) and a weekend day (Saturday), and we cross over the lunch hour.” Volunteers will assist donors with unloading glass from their cars, inspecting

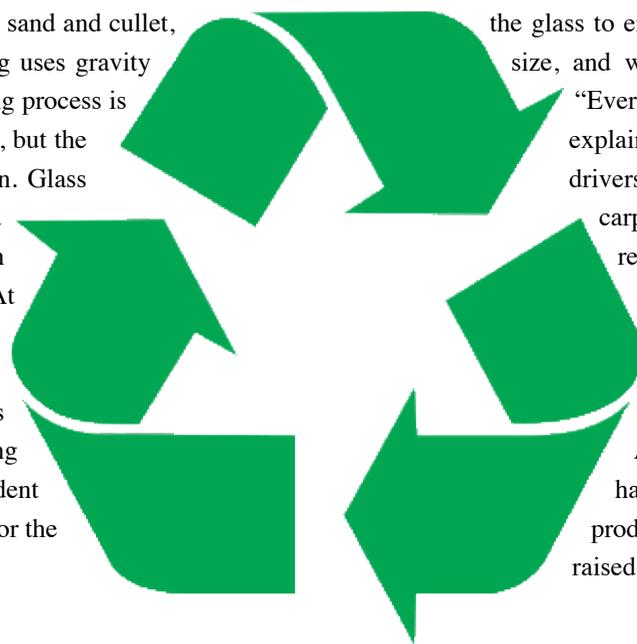
the glass to ensure it meets donation standards, sorting by color and size, and weighing the donations prior to the crushing process. “Everybody has something they can bring to the table,” Annie explains. “From help with grant writing and administration to drivers for the future pick-up service. Even if it’s one-time carpentry work or sign making or grounds keeping, there really is something for everyone!”

Glass Act also makes a great project for your civic group, church organization, social club, or school. The Montessori Educational Center has taken on Glass Act as their annual service project. “All year long, they have been doing great work for us,” beams Annie. “They produced our signage, did a coffee drive and, in a half hour, raised \$540.00!” As part of their service, MEC volunteers come each Friday to work at the Center. “One of the teachers even produced a beautiful stained glass quilt to raise awareness,” says Annie. Likewise, Just Dance Studio conducted a glass drive, led by Jessica Cole, and saved 191 pounds of glass from ending up in a landfill, now set to be recycled at Glass Act. Reach out to Susan Duke, volunteer coordinator, at glassactrecycling.com/volunteer/ to sign up today!

Of course, financial contributions are key to the realization of the full circle recycling center that Annie has envisioned for Glass Act. You can do this in a number of ways. Immediately, donors can make secure contributions

directly to Glass Act at glassactrecycling.com/donate/. In the near future, Glass Act will also have its recycled products packaged and ready for sale, with proceeds benefitting their ongoing mission and work. “With fingers crossed, we look forward to having sand and cullet product being available in the month of July,” says Annie. Sign up for the newsletter on the website and follow Glass Act on Facebook and Instagram for updates as production begins.

“Recycling literally changes the universe,” says Davidson. “Glass Act will educate our communities and serve to strengthen the notion that every single household and business can make a difference by recycling their glass, making our communities cleaner for our future.” Now is the time to get in on the act, Cenla! Join Glass Act each Friday and Saturday, from 10:00am to 2:00pm at 5215 Leo Street in Alexandria and online any time at glassactrecycling.com.



Glass Act: The Art of Recycling

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