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Recycling efforts earn Rozmus professional award

Oak Park's long-time champion of recycling, Solid Waste Manager Karen Rozmus, has received a *Professional Manager of the Year* award from the Suburban Branch of the American Public Works Association, Chicago Metro Chapter.

"Karen is an outstanding professional manager because of her passion for her work and what she has accomplished," said Public Works Director John Wielebnicki, who nominated Rozmus for the award. "She truly strives to make a difference. Her energy is contagious and the Village of Oak Park and the Public Works Department are fortunate to have Karen as an integral part of the community and the organization."

Wielebnicki noted Rozmus' many accomplishments in his nomination, including the recycling-related events Rozmus coordinates, such as the bi-annual paint exchange, which offers a creative mechanism for residents to share and safely recycle usable paint. Rozmus also created a program to provide periodic shredding services to help residents safely recycle unneeded paper containing personal information, and has managed several electronic recycling events.

In response to learning she had won the award, Rozmus said, "It is a great honor to be recognized by my peers for my efforts. I love my job in Oak Park for many reasons, but the top two would be that I appreciate working with so many dedicated professionals and I am grateful to the community for being so environmentally conscious."

Among Rozmus' more ambitious recycling efforts in Oak Park was her key role in creating a program that replaced the small blue bins with much larger carts. With a tool to recycle more, residents could then opt for a smaller garbage cart and pay a lower collection fee.

Rozmus also championed the concept of *single-stream* recycling, which eliminated the need to separate cans, glass and paper, an approach that makes recycling much easier for consumers. Recycling materials now represent nearly a third of all refuse hauled from Oak Park.

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Working with others in the community on recycling programs also is a role Rozmus relishes. Her work with Oak Park elementary schools on a worm-composting project helped earn the Governor's *Green Youth Award* for Brooks Middle School students. She also has worked with School District 200 and various business districts to come up with ways to reduce their garbage by recycling more.

Among her official duties with the Village, Rozmus is the *Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design* (LEED) coordinator for the new Oak Park Public Works Facility, the first municipal public works building in Illinois to meet the national organizations' tough design standards. She also is the staff liaison to the Village's Environmental and Energy Advisory Commission, citizen volunteers who work to develop sustainable planning standards throughout the community.

As a member of American Public Works Association, Rozmus has been actively involved in and held positions with the Solid Waste Agency of North America, Keep Illinois Beautiful, West Cook County Solid Waste Agency, Illinois Recycling Association and, recently, with the Chicago Wilderness Association.

For more information on Rozmus or recycling efforts in the Village, call 358.5700 or e-mail publicworks@oak-park.us.

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