

Bio and Abstract

Mark Naef has been a tireless voice for recycling and the environment since the early 80's. He was a canvasser and field manager at the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) for 3 years working on the bottle bill, community right to know and the state superfund law. During that time he went door to door educating citizens and soliciting funds from Rochester to NYC. He then became a community organizer in East New York, Bed Stuyvesant and Brownsville for the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) working on community empowerment and environmental justice issues.

After a stint as a social studies teacher at Central Square, Baldwinsville and Onondaga schools in the late 80's, he became the canvass director of Recycle First in Onondaga County. The group amassed over 3000 paid members in little over 3 months leading to the award winning recycling program here in Onondaga County. Mark then went to work for the Empire Returns/Resource Recycling Technologies (RRT) corporation and was an integral player in operating and sourcing material for the first merchant Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) in NYS located right here in Syracuse. RRT pioneered the existing blue bin program and built recycling facilities from Maine to Florida. As more programs came on line in the early 90's Mark went to work with Daystar Recycling Corporation and began paying municipalities all over NYS and Pennsylvania for their newspaper, now the cornerstone of for profit recycling facilities.

During this time Mark, a life long Democrat, ventured into Green politics and twice ran for county legislature, once for state senate and attended the national Green nominating convention in Denver.

In 2002 Mark opened his dual stream recycling center in East Syracuse, helping to preserve the quality of recyclables in Onondaga County. Through his facility he has opened up markets for new recyclables and attempted to educate the public about recycling; offering tours and sponsoring an annual scholarship for high school juniors and seniors.

He is a board member and past and future vice president of the New York State Association of Reduction, Reuse and Recycling (NYSARRR). He helped found the Buy Recycled Alliance of New York (BRANY) and is one of the leading proponents of the Go Green Initiative (GGI) locally and statewide. He was voted the 2005 NYS recycler of the year.

Mark's presentation will focus on events from 2002 on; the opening of his recycling facility, his efforts with NYSARRR, BRANY and the GGI.