

# Local Businesses Keep Disposal Costs Down

**Thiele Technologies** in Fergus Falls has a unique business, developing the technology for the design of packaging machinery. Thiele, a division of Barry-Wehmiller Companies, Inc., creates a variety of high-speed packaging systems, from state-of-the-art cartoning machinery to automated bag handling, weighing, filling, closing, sealing, and palletizing equipment. As part of the technology development process, they often receive numerous samples to test their machinery. Some examples include 9" plastic pie plate covers, plastic produce packaging, and other usable household products. To reduce waste and keep disposal costs down, Thiele Technologies contacted the Otter Tail County Solid Waste Department to have these items placed on the County's Materials Exchange List. With help from the List, Thiele Technologies has been able to distribute many of these sample materials to people and organizations who can use them.



*Betsy Bjerklie, Solid Waste & Chris Peterson, Thiele Technologies*



**Northern Contours** in Fergus Falls Northern Contours, a cabinet and door manufacturer, has two plants in Fergus Falls. The plant located on Roberts Street specializes in thermafoil application of vinyl to particle board. The plant located on Highway 210 East focuses on particle board with a hardwood veneer overlay. The Highway 210 East plant uses formaldehyde free particle board made of wheat stock. Northern Contours goal is to use the least amount of particle board for less waste and dust. To help maximize output and minimize waste they have a special computer program that optimizes cutting and routing. Even with the computer technology they are still generating 70 to 80 tons of sawdust per week.

To reduce waste and keep disposal costs down, Northern Contours contacted the Otter Tail County Solid Waste Department to have these items placed on the County's Materials Exchange List. With help from the List, Northern Contours was contacted by the Minnesota Extension Service and they were able to find an outlet for Northern Contours unwanted sawdust. Northern Contours is currently supplementing local beef and dairy farmers with 80 percent of their sawdust. The remaining sawdust is used as a heat source to dry cattle feed supplements. In addition to successfully exchanging sawdust, Northern Contours has 55 gallon fiber drums on the Materials Exchange list. It is estimated they exchange 270-300 barrels per year.

There are several advantages to materials exchange and many businesses, organizations and households have had the opportunity to take part in this successful program. The Otter Tail County Materials Exchange has helped Thiele Technologies and Northern Contours find a new life for many goods, instead of throwing them in the trash. By utilizing the Materials Exchange Program, Thiele and Northern Contours reduced their waste stream significantly and has the added benefit of saving money yearly in disposal costs.

In October of 1999, the Otter Tail County Solid Waste Department was awarded a grant from the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance. The grant provided funding to help initiate and conduct a Materials Exchange Program in Otter Tail County as a free service to link businesses, organizations and households that have reusable goods they no longer need to those who can use them.

The Otter Tail County Solid Waste Department continues this program by listing items at [www.co.otter-tail.mn.us/solidwaste](http://www.co.otter-tail.mn.us/solidwaste). Additionally, a semi-annual exchange list is sent to all businesses, organizations and households who have identified an interest or have offered materials to the exchange. For more information on the Otter Tail County Materials Exchange contact the Otter Tail County Solid Waste Department at 1-218-998-8595.