

Manager of Distribution Services Awarded for Significant Sustainability Efforts

As Mike Gray began his impromptu award-winner speech at the Michigan Recycling Coalition's (MRC) annual conference, he was thankful he happened to dress up that day.

Our Manager of Distribution Services was awarded the first-ever Unsung Hero award by the MRC, for his continuously-improving environmental performance and sustainability efforts.

"My role within Meijer is to manage our waste and recycling programs, as well as trailer cleanout programs," Mike said. "Aside from your basic recycling of cardboard, metal, and shrink film, it is making sure we are doing that in an efficient manner that supports our communities."

The MRC advocates for recycling, and its members across the state. The organization works to educate, and mobilize public and private sector manufacturers, processors, and service providers to pursue and achieve recycling goals. The MRC presents awards at its annual conference.

"This year, we added the Unsung Hero award to recognize individuals doing important work, often behind the scenes," said Kerrin O'Brien, Executive Director of the Michigan Recycling Coalition. "There was only one Unsung Hero award given this year - to Mike."

In 2021, Mike led the recycling of 151,000 tons of cardboard, 3,500 tons of plastic film, and 15,000 tons of food waste. Mike also improved the performance of our company's pallet and fixture repurposing programs. "Under Mike's leadership, Meijer diverted 72 percent of our waste from landfill in 2021, exceeding our 70 percent goal," said Erik Petrovskis, Director of Environmental Compliance and Sustainability at Meijer.

"When we talk about diversion, it is really about what we can do to keep waste out of the landfill," Mike said. "Some of the large drivers for that are food waste that allow us to recycle products, such as vegetables, bread, and milk that gets repurposed into animal feed."

When asked about what fuels his passion for sustainability in his role, Mike's drive comes from the uniqueness of the everyday challenge.

"I'm able to deal with all facets of the company at any given point, everything has a bit of a nuanced opportunity to see what we can improve in our sustainability efforts," he said.

It takes a team effort to lessen environmental impact across our six-state footprint.

"A lot of what we do is driven by our team members at a store-level and a distribution level," Mike said. "The award I received is a representation of the work these team members put in every day."

Additional assets available online: [**Photos**](#) ⁽¹⁾

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