In July of 2010, a partnership between Mercer County and Lawrence County became official forming the Lawrence-Mercer Recycling & Solid Waste Department. Through an intragovernmental agreement, the Department became the implementing entity for solid waste management and recycling operations in Mercer and Lawrence Counties. Since many of the programs overlap, this partnership enables our Department to save taxpayers' money by sharing costs between both the counties.

The mission of the Department is to:

- Provide convenient recycling opportunities,
- Provide recycling and collection opportunities for hard-to-dispose materials such as tires, electronics, and household hazardous waste,
- Provide technical assistance to businesses, institutions, organizations, and municipalities,
- Form partnerships with like-minded organizations and agencies,
- Conduct public education programs to raise awareness about proper waste management and its benefits, and
- Assist municipalities and businesses in meeting regulatory compliance with local, state, and federal recycling and waste management laws.

Programs offered at the county level are either required by the Commonwealth, required by the 10 year Municipal Solid Waste Management Plan, or established to fill a community need not covered by a municipal program. Some of these programs include the following:

Big Blue Bin Program. This program was initiated to provide recycling to residents in rural areas without access to curbside recycling. The drop-off program in Mercer County has collection bins located at the Perry, Hempfield, and Pymatuning Township municipal buildings for the recycling of fiber (paper and cardboard).

Hard-to-Recycle Monthly Events. This program is offered monthly at rotating locations throughout Mercer and Lawrence County for the recycling of oddball household items including holiday lights, VHS tapes, DVD/CD's, athletic shoes, books, plastic bags/film, and thermostats.

Solid Waste Plan Development. These Plans secure landfill disposal capacity for all of the municipal solid waste generated in Mercer County over a period of 10 years. They include an analysis of past, present, and projected trends for solid waste disposal, waste minimization, and recycling programs.

Annual Recycling Report. This report is required by the PA Department of Environmental Protection at the end of each calendar year. Recycling data from all businesses, recyclers,

and haulers operating within Mercer and Lawrence County is collected and compiled in a database for the Commonwealth.

Public Education. Seminars are offered on a variety of recycling topics and backyard composting. Participation in special events like Earth Day festivals, litter cleanups, and other environmental programs.

Grant Development. Grants help fund the Department and its staff, county recycling infrastructure, and public education and outreach activities.

The Recycling/Solid Waste Department cannot be effective alone. Much of our efforts, especially in recycling, would not be possible without the dedication of citizens throughout Mercer and Lawrence County. If you have questions or ideas, feel free to contact us!

Jerry Zona, Director & Lawrence County Recycling Coordinator

Megan Gahring, Deputy Director & Mercer County Recycling Coordinator

Jerry Zona is a Senior Certified Recycling Professional with more than thirty years of experience in the solid waste and recycling field. Mr. Zona began his career in January 1992 for the Lawrence County Recycling/Solid Waste Department where he served as Assistant Director and Compliance Officer. From March 2001 to June 2005, he was employed by PA CleanWays as a regional coordinator and project manager. Mr. Zona returned to Lawrence County in 2007 and is currently Director of the Lawrence-Mercer Counties Recycling/Solid Waste Department. He also works part-time for Tri-County CleanWays as the Executive Director. Mr. Zona serves on the Pennsylvania Solid Waste Advisory Committee and Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful board of directors. Mr. Zona is a graduate of Penn State University with a B.S. in biology.

Megan Gahring is Deputy Director of the Lawrence-Mercer County Recycling/Solid Waste Department, and the designated Recycling Coordinator for Mercer County. She has diverse environmental career with experience in regulatory air quality compliance, grants management, and soil and water conservation programs. Since 2011, she has worked for the Recycling and Solid Waste Department and is a PA Certified Recycling Professional. She has a BS degree in Environmental Health from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio.