Minnie Payne, (c) 972-683-2058, [jdpmap77@gmail.com](mailto:jdpmap77@gmail.com)

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STYROFOAM RECYCLING IN LUCAS

Victoria Howard, creator/organizer of Lucas Styrofoam recycling. 972-768-6067, [musical.mama@yahoo.com](mailto:musical.mama@yahoo.com)

<http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/lucas-tx-population/>

According to the most recent United States Census estimates, Lucas, Texas’ estimated population is 7,493, small in number compared to nearby Texas cities. But sometimes, it isn’t the size of the package, but what is inside. And when it comes to recycling, Lucas is big.

In January 2018, at the hands of creator/organizer Victoria Howard and volunteers, Lucas city council reinstated curbside recycling. At that time, Howard told *Green Source DFW* “The idea of not having a recycling program so frustrated me that I didn’t see any other option than to act. I couldn’t have lived with myself if I did not try. I knew I may not win, but I had to try.”

In May 2018, Howard and volunteers again jumped on their green wagon by starting a Styrofoam recycling program, wherein not only Lucas residents, but anyone can drop off #6 Styrofoam items such as clean egg cartons, meat trays, fast food clamshell containers, cups, packing material, and bowls the first Saturday of every month from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m..at the Lucas Starbucks.

Of most importance, credit is also due Dick Hildenbrand, Howard’s partner in the Styrofoam recycling program. Hildenbrand’s trailer is utilized to help transport the Styrofoam to Frisco. He personally began a Styrofoam recycling program in his church years ago, taking the collection to Waxahachie to the Dart Container Company to be recycled. Howard shared with Hildenbrand that Frisco’s program was much closer, and they joined forces to do a Lucas drop off event, in addition to picking up items from his church.

“Since starting our program, we have seen participation grow with each event. I appreciate that people not only bring their own Styrofoam, but ask friends who also attend,” Howard shares. “It’s also heartening that we recognize the same faces month after month. People are really committed to not putting Styrofoam items in a landfill.”

Because weight and actual number of Styrofoam items vary, it’s difficult to gauge weight, but the October drop off Styrofoam to-be-recycled items filled a 4x4x8 trailer, SUV, and part of a van in 30 minutes and was taken to the Frisco Environmental Center for bailing.

Howard explains that because the Frisco Environmental Center offers Styrofoam recycling, Lucas and surrounding areas can participate in the Styrofoam recycling program. Frisco is the first city in North Texas to buy a Styrofoam bailing machine. In 2006, Frisco City Environmental Education Coordinator Julianah Marie, with a grant from the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), purchased the first Styrofoam baler for about $40,000 and because of its success, a new bailer was purchased last August. Fort Worth is following suit.

One bale weighs about 40 pounds, and when a horse trailer load of Styrofoam material is processed, about three bales are produced. Frisco sells the bales for about 22 cents per pound for reuse, not a money-making proposition. “Because of Frisco’s environmental foresight and generous recycling open door policy, our program exists.”

Other communities who wish to start a Styrofoam recycling program will find that the process is not difficult. Howard says that a good way to spark interest is to advertise on neighborhood social media (Facebook, Nextdoor, HOA websites) or take out a small ad in your local newsletter. “Most importantly, someone needs to commit to being there rain or shine on the designated collection day and be a consistent collector.”