

City of Owasso honored at KOB award ceremony

By Art Haddaway News Editor | Posted: Monday, November 21, 2016 2:46 pm

Thursday marked an exciting evening for the City of Owasso, as around 30 staff members and partnering community representatives were honored at Keep Oklahoma Beautiful's (KOB's) 26th annual Environmental Excellence Awards Celebration.

The event, held at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, recognized Owasso in four categories:

- **City of Owasso:** Winner of KOB Government Program - Green Place
- **Owasso Strong Neighborhood Initiative (OSNI)-Owasso CARES:** Finalist in KOB Government Program - Green Cleanup
- **Urban Soul - Xtreme Youth Ministries (Owasso CARES partner) of Owasso First Assembly of God:** Winner of Volunteer Community Group
- **Chris Coager (Owasso CARES resident volunteer leader):** KOB Affiliate Champion

Keep Oklahoma Beautiful is a statewide nonprofit organization founded in 1965 that aims to empower citizens to preserve and enhance the state's natural beauty and ensure a healthy, sustainable environment. The culmination of this work each year – including Owasso's – is exemplified at its annual, statewide awards competition.

The City's OSNI program, which encompasses Owasso CARES, Keep Owasso Clean and other volunteer efforts, brings City officials and citizens together to help make neighborhoods across town safer, stronger and more environmentally friendly through various cleanup and restoration efforts.

“(This) has validated our program on a state level,” Owasso Neighborhood Coordinator Jerry Fowler said. “When we accept an award, it's not (OSNI), it's all of us in the city of Owasso – that's what we ought to take pride in is the fact that we have received recognition for what we're trying to do in this community to make a difference.”

In July, the *City of Owasso* moved to the new City Hall at 102 W. Second Ave. from the old City Hall at 111 N. Main St. The renovation incorporated the use of recycled materials in the new building, which have resulted in significant energy savings. Some examples include the installation of a state-of-the-art HVAC system, new LED lighting throughout the premises, and Fritz tile manufactured with recycled glass and aggregate.



city of owasso

Owasso City staff members and partnering community representatives were honored at Keep Oklahoma Beautiful's 26th annual Environmental Excellence Awards Celebration. Courtesy of City of Owasso

Additionally, the *Owasso Strong Neighborhood Initiative* hosted numerous cleanup events in the spring to help protect and beautify Owasso and encourage community involvement. The program initiated an E-waste cleanup and several litter-free events, and also painted fire hydrants, took on yard and landscaping work, and cleared debris from several areas around the city.

“We ultimately want to be a community, and to be a community, you have to get people’s involvement, they have to become engaged,” Fowler said. “That’s what’s neat about (OSNI) is ... it’s incorporating all we have to offer the city, and now you go out here and you partner with your residents, it just makes a great combination of what we can be successful with.”

Urban Soul - Xtreme Youth Ministries has also contributed to making Owasso a cleaner city. Youth Pastor Kevin Norwood joined OSNI in 2011 and has since provided 679 volunteers serving 1,358 hours for the City Volunteer Program. The group has given their time to do everything from pulling weeds to painting lines in parking spaces to cleaning litter to organizing storage rooms.

“I’m training future leaders, I’m training students how to lead ... so that’s a great thing for me is we have students leading students,” Norwood said. “We like doing things that help our community, we believe serving is one of the things Christ taught us to do, and so we model that for students.”

Longtime Owasso resident *Chris Coager* has also devoted himself to preserving Owasso’s clean neighborhoods by creating a volunteer group called the El Rio Vista Network. In 2008, he began serving with OSNI and has led various cleanups, neighborhood entrance improvements and general beautification projects over the last decade. He has also helped plan, coordinate and lead volunteers at Owasso’s Day of Service.

“We started something brand new (OSNI) eight years ago here in the city to be proactive, and I don’t think any of us had an idea for sure where this was going to lead us,” Fowler said. “It’s kind of setting a legacy for us, because it takes that citizen involvement ... to really be what we want to be, and that’s community, a place where we all want to live.”