



You may know Jerry Knoll from the Rotary Club or as your neighbor in the Village of Belvedere, but what you may not know is that he developed the first mandatory recycling program in the U.S.



Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun

GETTING TO KNOW JERRY KNOLL

Age: 78
Village: Belvedere
Spouse: Carol
Family: Four kids, two grandkids
Moved Here In: 2007
Moved Here From: Hamburg, New York
Favorite Villages Activities: Rotary Club of The Villages, riding his three-wheel recumbent bike



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Jerry Knoll cared about recycling before it was mainstream. In fact, he is one of the forces who helped make the act of converting waste into reusable materials a common practice today.

Knoll studied civil engineering at Erie Community College and worked in land development and civil engineering before being appointed director of public works for the Village of Hamburg in New York in 1980.

When Knoll interviewed for the job, they asked if he'd be willing to design, develop and implement a mandatory recycling program for the village.

"Back then, recycling wasn't what it is today — nothing mandatory," said Knoll, of the Village of Belvedere. "But I said yes and got the job."

Knoll immediately set to

work on the program, and a year later, he had installed what he said was the United States' first mandatory recycling program.

There was an element of the community that didn't agree with recycling and fought Knoll's department and took them to court.

"We won that case," Knoll said. "Then the program started to take off."

He then traveled around different communities in the Northeast to give presentations on the Village of Hamburg's recycling program because officials in other places were looking into developing programs of their own.

Knoll was appointed to a recycling forum for the state of New York, where it was his job to develop a bottle bill and recycling law for the state. By

1988, the Solid Waste Management Act, which included Knoll's efforts, became law in New York.

His program in the Village of Hamburg earned many glowing reports by officials, which Knoll said further solidified what they were doing and how they were doing it. Knoll was awarded the Charles Walter Nichols Award for Environmental Excellence as well as several other merits.

Another effort that Knoll took very seriously was snow removal.

"We prided ourselves in keeping those roads open and dealing with the snows that we got in an efficient manner," Knoll said, adding that the community often worked all hours of the day and night to plow up to 11 feet of snowfall.

Knoll's work in recycling

and snow removal were the subject of many editorial cartoons in the community's local newspaper, a collection that Knoll proudly keeps in a binder.

"It was 27 years of fun," Knoll said. "It was a great job."

Knoll said he is most proud of the impact he got to make. On the side, Knoll was actively involved in his son Erik's soccer career, coaching teams and serving as president of soccer clubs in Hamburg and Buffalo. Erik went on to play college and professional soccer.

"It was a great time," Jerry said. "He did all the things he wanted to do, soccer-wise."

Jerry met his wife, Carol, when he walked into a credit union in Hamburg, where she was an accountant. He said, "Hi, I'm Bill Clinton," and she

said, "Hi, I'm Hillary." They eloped in Las Vegas in 2003.

Jerry retired in March 2007 and was on a one-way flight to Florida four days later. He and Carol had bought a house a few years prior after visiting one of his sisters, who also lives in The Villages. In The Villages, Jerry served on the Architectural Review Committee for two years and has been on the District 5 Board of Supervisors for eight years.

He also is very active in the Rotary Club of The Villages and said he served as the group's president in the 2012-13 year.

Between the Rotary Club, being a district supervisor and riding his bike, he and Carol like to travel around Florida.

"We're in the process of seeing everything the state has to offer," he said.

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