

Business



Car trouble

Agencies may restrict auto donations to charities E-3

Kathy Kristof

BUSINESS FOCUS



JOHN CLANTON / Tulsa World

A truck pulls into American Environmental landfill west of Sand Springs. Kenneth Burkett bought the landfill in 1990 when it was in disrepair and has spent millions of dollars since on upgrades.

Tulsan cleaning up in solid waste sector

By NANCY HOLLINGSHEAD
World Staff Writer

Kenneth Burkett doesn't need to boast when discussing the refuse company he rescued from bankruptcy more than two decades ago.

Others, including a state agency, are doing that for him.

With the help of a dedicated work force, Burkett has transformed American Waste Control Inc. into the nation's 86th-largest waste disposal company, according to the June issue of Waste Age magazine.

Solid waste is big business nationwide, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

In 2001, Americans generated more than 229 million tons of waste, or approximately 4.4 pounds per person per day. Of

that total, more than 35 percent was paper products, with yard trimmings second at 12.2 percent, and food scraps and plastics each with more than 11 percent.

The industry also is big business in Tulsa. American Waste Control, based at 1420 W. 35th St., reported more than \$12 million in revenue last year and projects revenue to climb to \$19 million in 2004, according to the magazine.

But Burkett is most proud of the turnaround at the former Shell Creek landfill, located three miles west of Sand Springs on 177th West Avenue, which he bought in the fall of 2000.

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality wanted the previous owner to close the facility after being fined for numerous violations.

The landfill "had no cover; litter

was blowing everywhere; and it was out of compliance and under an order from the DEQ" to close, said Monty Elder, a DEQ spokeswoman.

Burkett renamed the operation American Environmental Landfill Inc., and infused a substantial amount of money and labor into its transformation. Purchases included a \$1 million German-made compactor and a \$160,000 unit manufactured in Sweden that washes the tires of refuse trucks before they leave the landfill, keeping mud and debris from the roadway.

There's even a street sweeper hired to clean the road leading to the landfill twice a week.

"American Environmental went in and really cared about it," Elder

SEE REFUSE E-6



STEPHEN HOLMAN / Tulsa World

Guy Blagg (left), sales manager, is joined by president and chief executive Kenneth Burkett at American Waste Control, 1420 W. 35th St.

American Waste Control Inc.

Address: 1420 W. 35th St.

Service: Commercial refuse service. Also operates American Environmental Landfill Inc., 1200 N. 177th West Avenue

Principals: Kenneth F. Burkett, president; Gene Dunn, vice presi-

dent; Guy Blagg, sales and marketing manager.

Employees: 100

Established: 1980

2003 revenue: About \$12 million

Web site: www.americanwastecontrol.com

World to make downtown improvements



STEPHEN PINGRY / Tulsa World

The Skelly Building (outlined in foreground), at Fourth Street and Boulder Avenue, will be razed this summer, along with the former Froug's building (outlined at left) to make way for improvements on the block.

By TOM DROEGE
World Staff Writer

Continuing a nearly century-long evolution, a downtown city block occupied mainly by the Tulsa World newspaper is changing again.

In an estimated \$4 million project, two defunct buildings in the block to the northeast of Fourth Street and Boulder Avenue will be demolished this summer to make way for new facilities serving the newspaper, said Robert E. Lorton III, president of World Publishing Co.

World Publishing owns the buildings to be razed. They are the nine-story Skelly Building, 23 W. Fourth St., and a four-story building at 10 W. Third St. most recently occupied by Bank of Oklahoma.

A new, \$3.2 million heating and cooling system for the newspaper will replace the building on Third Street, and a parking lot for Tulsa World customers will be built where the Skelly Building sits.

"This reflects the Tulsa World's longstanding commitment to the

downtown area," Lorton said. "We bought these buildings to ensure we had a footprint large enough to expand to meet our needs."

The investment is in addition to about \$60 million in improvements World Publishing has made to its property in the past decade. The centerpiece of that was two state-of-the-art Swiss-made WIFAG presses that were installed in the late 1990s.

Using the wrecking ball method, Ark Wrecking Co. of Oklahoma Inc. estimates the 90-day demolition of the two buildings will start in late July or early August. The building on Third Street, which World Publishing bought in 1992, will be the first to go. Interior demolition work there has started.

Once the home of Froug's department store, the building's last tenant was Bank of Oklahoma. Those operations were moved to 41st Street and Sheridan Road in 2000, said BOK spokesman Danny Boyd.

When that structure is gone, the Skelly Building will face the wrecking ball. World Publishing purchased it in

1993 and, except for a shoe repair shop, the building is empty.

"This building has some historical significance, but having been built in 1921 it faces many structural and code problems that make a total renovation not feasible," Lorton said.

The space will be better used as a parking lot for Tulsa World customers, who now have to rely on parking meters when they come downtown to submit classified advertisements, take over subscriptions or buy back issues, he said.

"This will allow our customers quick, convenient access to our building so they can take care of business and be on their way," he said.

The only remaining business in the Skelly Building is Tulsa Shoe Rebuilders, 320 S. Boulder Ave. The owners, Otis and Ida Kemp, said they took over the business in 1970. They plan to retire and close the store in the next few weeks.

"We just decided that at our age it's too late to relocate," said Otis Kemp,

SEE PROJECT E-6