

## A Seasoned Recycler

Four Season Recycling & Trading, Ashland, Va., got its start three years ago as a one-person brokerage operation, with \$900,000 in annual sales. Today the company has grown to close to \$4 million in sales and leases its own plant.

Owner Wanda McGee joined Reynolds Aluminum Recycling in 1977 as the first woman employee to drive a tractor-trailer across the state for the company. Eventually she was promoted to plant management with Reynolds and later with SP Recycling. In 2009, McGee lost her job unexpectedly at the age of 56. Within weeks though, McGee had her own startup, having maintained a network of contacts. As the business grew, McGee added employees with the experience she lacked. And as it turned out, all of them were over the age of 50. The new hires brought valuable experience in mechanics, finance and operations. We talked with McGee to find out more about her business philosophies.



Four Season Recycling's two-ram baler

**Q: How did your company originate?**

**A:** Immediately after losing my job, I considered brokering jobs with a couple of big companies but ultimately decided to call on my old customers. At first I had no plant, but eventually I got to the point where I could add a part-time administrative person and then two managers. In June of 2009 I called one of my old customers, a Shred-it franchise, and asked if they would be interested in sharing a building where my company would bale and market their shredded paper. That's what moved us toward having an actual facility as opposed to simply brokering.

**Q: What materials do you specialize in?**

**A:** The company processes paper, cans, metal and plastics and has a two-ram baler that can make bales suitable for export or for domestic mills. Most of our customers are industrial distribution centers, document destruction companies, printers, commercial manufacturers that have printer waste and scrap dealers.

**Q: What makes you different from your competitors?**

**A:** We're local, and I think people like that. With the big companies, faces change, and our customers like the continuity we offer. It's a relationship-based business, so we spend time developing those relationships. We try to find out what our customers' motivations are. Waste is not high on some people's lists until they see what they're spending.

**Q: Your business philosophy?**

**A:** I place a huge value on my employees because I don't know it all. We have good people with many years of experience.

### AT A GLANCE

**Company:** Four Season Recycling & Trading LLC

**Owner:** Wanda McGee (pictured below)

**Headquarters:** Ashland, Va.

**Location:** One

**Year Established:** 2009

**No. of Employees:** Eight

**Website:** [www.fourseasonrecycling.com](http://www.fourseasonrecycling.com)

**Services Provided:** Scrap recycling solutions and waste reduction programs for numerous industries. The company partners with customers to analyze their waste streams, maximize their recycling efforts and also reduce the environmental impact of what's being discarded. Four Season deals in domestic and foreign markets for paper, plastics, metals and recyclable byproducts from its customers, and also is able to install recycling equipment, such as balers and scrap handling systems.

