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## Oakleaf Opening 'New Chapter'

By Greg Bordonaro  
gbordonaro@HartfordBusiness.com 04/19/10

With nearly a year under his belt as the chief executive and president of East Hartford-based Oakleaf Waste Management, Steve Preston is making his mark on the company.

The former head of the U.S. Small Business Administration, who took over Oakleaf's top spot in August, recently unveiled several company-wide improvements, which include expanding service lines and the appointment of several new senior executives.

"Clients and vendors will notice an immediate upgrade in the quality of experience they have with us," Preston said. "It's a new chapter for our brand."

Oakleaf is the privately-held waste-management logistics and recycling-solutions company that was founded by East Hartford entrepreneur Jim Barnes, who built the business into a \$700 million enterprise.

The company, which employs 650 people, contracts with 5,000 waste haulers across the country to serve residential, retail, commercial and industrial customers, including Wal-Mart Stores Inc. One of Oakleaf's main focuses is integrating environmentally sustainable strategies into the waste logistics model.

Among its new initiatives, Oakleaf is expanding its services for clients doing remodeling and construction work by helping them recycle materials that they recover from those projects. Oakleaf, for example, is working with one large retail client on a new effort to aggressively market and sell their scrap metals in order to turn them into a revenue stream.

The company is also increasing its focus on manufacturers, in addition to its traditional large retail and restaurant clients.

Preston said Oakleaf is beefing up its consulting services to help customers comply with emerging regulations for items like e-waste, batteries, and light bulbs.

"We are moving into some other areas because many of our customers are looking for help with compliance," Preston said. "These are issues that are becoming increasingly important with the continually changing regulatory landscape on the local, state and federal level."

Oakleaf is investing in its technology, including expanding its e-business platform, allowing customers to see where their waste is going and better track their costs and progress toward environmental objectives.

Preston was named president of the company in June 2009 and took over as CEO in August. He replaced Barnes, who also recently stepped aside as Oakleaf's chairman.

Preston said Barnes remains a shareholder with the company but he left his chairman post to avoid any conflicts of interest. Barnes is also the chairman of Hartford-based FM Facility Maintenance, which has business ties with Oakleaf, Preston said.

Preston spent more than 10 years at Lehman Brothers and First Data Corporation and has a long history in finance and the services industry. Most notably, he spent nine years with Tennessee-based The ServiceMaster Co., where he was chief financial officer during periods of significant growth and restructuring. He also served as ServiceMaster's executive vice president of strategic services.

Preston said the waste management industry is changing rapidly as more companies look to move waste away from landfills to find more sustainable alternatives. Larger companies in particular want to reduce their costs and environmental footprint, boost their bottom line and become better corporate citizens.



Steve Preston, president, Oakleaf Waste Management, East Hartford

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