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## Basic American Foods strives to be eco-friendly

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The awards hanging in Plover's Basic American Foods plant make it clear what the company is concerned with: the environment.

The company, which produces dehydrated potatoes, onions, garlic and refried bean products for food service and industrial customers, has recycling and pollution prevention awards lining a corridor.

"What we stand for ... is basically to leave the planet as good or better than we found it," said Gary Rzentkowski, facility buyer who deals with recycling.

Basic American Foods reuses several products and reduces the amount of materials going into landfills from its facility.

It recycles the common materials, such as cardboard and plastic, but it also sells, reuses or recycles things such as Styrofoam peanuts, batteries, florescent lamps, inks and chemicals, laboratory waste and used oil. Some employees also videotape what is compacted to be sure nothing is in it that shouldn't go to a landfill, and the reduction is significant, Rzentkowski said

The company has reduced its landfill waste by 90 percent since 2002, plant manager Paul Landon said.

The plant tries to buy items that won't harm for the environment to begin with, and recently, it changed all the lights to more efficient florescents -- a 65 percent reduction in electricity.

In recognition of this work, The Portage County Solid Waste Department named the company the "Remarkable Business Recycler of the Month" in May, one of the several awards hanging on its wall.

"When we look for recipients for the award, we like to see companies or individuals going above and beyond even what's required of recycling," assistant to the administrator at the Solid Waste Department Erica Dimka said. "Basic American Foods definitely does that. It's pretty amazing to hear everything they do here; it was more than I was expecting."

Landon said it was definitely a surprise to find out they won.

"It was great to hear that we'd been recognized for our efforts. It wasn't something that we were looking to do," he said.

The company is constantly looking for other environmentally friendly things they can do in its business.

"Energy reduction is one of the hot topics that we're investigating right now. It's always been on the radar and it's always been important," Landon said. "As technology continues to evolve, we're staying abreast to that. Energy costs are going up so it's important that we stay focused on that."