

GCC Q&A

Matt White
General Manager
Yaffe Iron &
Metal Co. Inc.
(Muskogee, Okla.)



(Sixth in a monthly series of profile interviews
with Gulf Coast Chapter members.)

Born: I was born Oct. 29, 1975, in Muskogee, Okla.

Education: I earned a Bachelor of Finance degree from Northeastern State University (Tahlequah, Okla.) in 1999.

Family: I've been married to my beautiful wife Brandy for 20 years. We have two daughters—Maddie, 17, who is a senior in high school, and Cammie, 14, who is a freshman in high school.

When and how did you enter the recycling industry? After graduating college, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. My father is in banking, and I figured I'd end up there as well. Instead, I took a job as a "manager in training" for Marriott Management Services. After spending about a month in the training in Rhode Island, I realized that wasn't what I wanted to do. At the same time, Bob Yaffe happened to be in the bank one day and mentioned to my father that they were looking for managers to join the training program at Yaffe. I didn't know anything about scrap at the time but was intrigued by it. I started as a manager trainee there in September 2000 and spent about a year in the program. I then became an assistant manager in Muskogee and moved into the general manager position about 10 years ago.

What was it about the industry that prompted you to build

a career in it? It's hard to narrow down to one reason. There's never a dull moment in this business, and no two days are alike. You never stop learning. I enjoy the satisfaction of watching a mixed-up pile of "junk" become a sorted and processed pile of scrap. The people are also great—the employees here are like family. I've built some long-lasting friendships within this industry.

What have been a few of your most rewarding professional achievements? I was able to get to work with Bob Yaffe in the early years of my career before he passed away in 2006. I'm also on the board of directors for the Oklahoma Recyclers Association and have been involved in getting several bills passed to help curb scrap metal theft.

What are you passionate about? Spending time with family. Having two teenage daughters, we're always doing something. I also enjoy bass fishing and helping people.

Tell us something about you that would surprise people. I play the drums. I started taking lessons about two years ago. It's a stress-reliever for me, although it may cause stress for my wife.

If you could improve something about yourself, what would it be? I'm a very detailed, organized person, so sometimes my expectations of others can be too high.

What do you like to do in your free time? Spend time with family and friends, work in the yard, go fishing, and watch "The Office."

When and why did your company decide to join ISRI and the Gulf Coast Chapter? The Yaffe Companies has been a member of ISRI and GCC for many years—I'd guess since sometime in the 1970s. Working with ISRI and GCC has so many benefits, from dealing with legislative issues, forming business relationships, learning from others—it's invaluable.

Have you held any volunteer leadership positions within GCC? I've served two terms on the GCC Board of Directors, rolling off in April 2021.

What benefits have you received from your GCC involvement? I've been able to see what the GCC really does for our industry. It's amazing to see what goes on behind the scenes and how much time and effort goes into making this chapter one of the best for our industry. I've met some great people, and GCC has some of the best leaders in the business.

What leadership positions have you had at the ISRI national level? I currently serve on the ISRI State Policy Subcommittee representing Oklahoma.

What are the major challenges facing your company and the overall industry today? Our challenges are no different than those that other recyclers face. Finding good employees seems to be almost impossible right now, especially truck

drivers. Other challenges include market volatility, legislative issues, and of course having to fight an invisible enemy called COVID-19.