



The Way I See It...

Blue Star Recyclers' Altruistic Endeavor

By Jennifer Elledge

A wise man once told me that altruism isn't always the driving force for doing something good. The determining factor that separates the good from the great are those who discover altruistic reasons for sustaining their cause.

We have all heard about the people who join a non-profit board because it looks good on their resume or those who do community service as a way to gain notoriety. Then along the way, something ignites inside as they begin to enjoy the work and recognize the positive difference it's making in the community. This newfound appreciation is the catalyst to push harder, think innovatively and ultimately, spark passion for the charitable cause. This story especially rings true with Bill Morris, President of BlueStar Recyclers, whose simple goal was to give disabled adults a job and not necessarily to protect the environment at the same time...but that's what happened!

About four years ago while managing the Wahsatch Program for Community Intersections, a nonprofit organization that serves adults with disabilities in Colorado Springs, Bill noticed that many of the clients enrolled in their programs showed a genuine aptitude and interest in disassembling electronic components as part of volunteer work activity. Even more, these individuals were willing to do it for free. This struck an emotional chord with Bill as he set out to find a way to pay them for their work. In Fall of 2008, the paid program was officially offered to four employees with disabilities....and so began the BlueStar Recyclers' story.

BlueStar Recyclers provides complete, *ethically* responsible electronic recycling services for the Southern Colorado region. All too often, consumers are duped into thinking that companies touting they recycle e-waste are doing it ethically. What consumers don't know is that unless they make a conscious, informed decision, many of the things thought to be recycled locally are in fact shipped to developing countries like China or Nigeria. The products are then disassembled, hard drives are taken out and the rest is smelted releasing a minefield of toxic chemicals (e.g. lead, mercury, flame retardants) into the air; most of which are breathed in by citizens of these developing countries.



Community Intersections' members diligently work to disassemble a computer tower at BlueStar.

Consumers can rest assured that BlueStar Recyclers is one of the ethical e-waste recyclers. In fact, Bill invites anyone to stop by anytime to visit the facility and meet its fourteen devoted employees. The positive impact on the disabled adults in the Community Intersections program staff at BlueStar is evident, as there have been only two sick days in over two years since the program's inception. "All their lives these people have had to depend on others, for five hours out of their day, BlueStar and the community depends on them,"

Equally powerful is the notion that recycling e-waste creates employment and revenue in the Pikes Peak region, while keeping the material out of landfills. **For every 35-40 residents who bring their e-waste to the Community Intersections depot location at 601 South Wahsatch Avenue for recycling, they can employ another disabled adult in BlueStar Recyclers' program.** Further, if Blue Star Recyclers collect and recycle another 30,000 pounds of e-waste per month from businesses, organizations, and agencies - they can cover all their operating costs to keep the program self-sustaining.

Colorado state law requires businesses, private organizations, and public agencies to recycle their electronic waste. Pikes Peak Sustainable Business Network Members are offered a 20% discount per pound on recycling fees and free pickup service with no minimum.

To support BlueStar Recyclers, a local business playing an integral role in building an environmentally healthy, economically thriving, and socially responsible Pikes Peak region, visit www.bluestarrecyclers.com.



PPSBN Members will be surprised to know how much can be recycled from an old computer or laptop.

Do you have a story you would like to share with PPSBN members? If so, contact Jennifer at Elledge@catamountinstitute.org to set up a site visit. Only one business can be featured each month!