

For Immediate Release
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VERN PROJECT CREATES LOCAL JOBS AND PROVIDES ELECTRONICS RECYCLING IN SOUTHERN COLORADO

October 10, 2011, Colorado Springs, CO – Blue Star Recyclers launched the VERN Project (Vocational Electronics Recycling Network) in Canon City, LaJunta, and Pueblo this week. Through a grant from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Blue Star Recyclers formed partnerships with organizations in these three communities to create a local resource where residents can recycle electronics and also support creation of local jobs for people with disabilities.

Blue Star Recyclers, a nonprofit based in Colorado Springs, was created in 2009 with the specific mission of using ethical electronics recycling to create vocational opportunities for people with disabilities. In less than two years the organization ethically recycled over 1.5 million pounds of electronics and currently employs ten individuals with autism and other types of disabilities. Blue Star Recyclers quickly realized that smaller communities do not have a convenient place to recycle obsolete televisions, computers, and appliances and they have few work options for disabled adults. The VERN Project provides an option to serve both needs.

Community partners for the VERN Project include:

- InspirationField, a human services non-profit headquartered in La Junta
- Southern Colorado Services and Recycling, a locally owned and operated latex paint recycler in Pueblo
- Canon City School District in Canon City

The three partner organizations will replicate the same operational model Blue Star Recyclers developed in Colorado Springs. Through the CDPHE grant, Blue Star Recyclers will help each partner develop the collection operation, create the jobs program, ensure environmentally responsible downstream companies process the recycled material and market its program to the local community.

“The grant from CDPHE helps us extend the benefits of our work in Colorado Springs to smaller communities in Southern Colorado,” explained Andy O'Riley, Vice President of Blue Star Recyclers. “By forming partnerships with local organizations in La Junta, Pueblo, and Canon City, we can now create an avenue for these communities to derive an environmental, social, and economic benefit from the e-waste they generate.” People with disabilities face well over 80% unemployment in Southern Colorado.

Jobs created by the VERN Project match unique job skills with a much-needed environmental service. Blue Star Recyclers' program in Colorado Springs demonstrated that some individuals with developmental disabilities, especially those with autism spectrum disorder, excel at the type of manual disassembly and separation activity required to responsibly recycle electronic components. “Anytime a job is created for someone with a disability, not only does that have a

substantial impact on the individual's sense of value and well-being, but it also benefits taxpayers by reducing the level of dependence on Social Security benefits and other government funded services," stated O'Riley.

The environmental impact of ethically recycling the components in electronics reduces dependence upon costly virgin mining operations and keeps toxic materials out of local landfills. "When you evaluate all the negative impacts of land-filling unwanted electronics compared to all the benefits that result from recycling this material through the VERN Project, it is difficult not to do the responsible thing," maintains Bill Morris, President of Blue Star.

For more information about Blue Star Recyclers or its VERN Project visit www.bluestarrecyclers.com, or call Andy O'Riley at 719.494.4238.