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newsmaker



“The proliferation of electronic devices over the past decade has created a massive and urgent environmental challenge and ReCellular has established itself as the cell phone recycling market leader.” - Jeff Bocan, Managing Director, Beringea.



The Washington Post

Help File: Erasing Cell Phone

By Rob Pegoraro

January 10, 2010

Q: I've got an old cellphone that I need to donate. How do I wipe my address book and call history off of it?

A: Many smartphones include a semi-obvious "reset" or "wipe" command to erase all your data (which is more than you can say for some computers), but the equivalent option on dumber phones may not be as easy to find.

Fortunately, a phone-recycling firm called ReCellular maintains a widely recommended database of these procedures at http://recellular.com/recycling/data_eraser. Choose the make and model of your phone from that page's drop-down menus, click the "Download Instructions" link, and type in your name, e-mail address and wireless carrier on the next page to have the instructions e-mailed to you.

Weird, yes, but it works. ReCellular provided accurate instructions two weeks ago on clearing the memory of an ancient Nextel phone, helpfully noting that its default "security code" was "000000." The Dexter, Mich.-based company also sent along the correct procedure for wiping a Palm Treo smartphone in a second test. And it hasn't e-mailed anything else since.

CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

Detroit and Southeast Michigan's premier business news and information website

Medical groups, businesses, charities offer aid for Haiti

By Nancy Kaffer

January 17, 2010

In the wake of last week's tragedy in Haiti, local businesses and institutions are offering aid to those affected by the brutal earthquake — and offering metro Detroiters multiple avenues to get involved.

It is estimated that at least one-third of Haiti's population of 9 million will need damage relief from the earthquake that hit the poverty-stricken country Jan. 12, leaving as many as 50,000 dead.

Local businesses and organizations offering aid include:

- The Michigan Health and Hospital Association is urging its 146 hospital members to directly coordinate their efforts with the American Red Cross and the U.S. Agency for International Development.
- Detroit-based World Medical Relief is collecting medical and surgical supplies from Southeast Michigan hospitals, including Detroit Medical Center and William Beaumont Hospitals in Royal Oak, and other health care organizations to ship to Haiti.
- The Michigan State Medical Society is encouraging doctors and others to contribute to the Red Cross and/or Doctors Without Borders.
- Troy-based Hollywood Market will match donations for relief efforts in Haiti made at any of its seven eastern Oakland County stores. The first \$10,000 in donations will be matched, and the grocery chain will send the funds to the Salvation Army.
- Miramar, Fla.-based Spirit Airlines, which operates at Detroit Metropolitan Airport, said it would award 5,000 miles to Free Spirit frequent-flier members who donate at least \$5 to the Red Cross, UNICEF or Yele Haiti to help provide relief.
- The General Motors Foundation approved a \$100,000 grant to the American Red Cross relief fund, and United Way of Washtenaw County sent an e-mail to its supporters to urge them to contribute to the United Way Worldwide Disaster Fund through its Web site at <https://volunteer.united-e-way.org/uwwwdisaster/donate/>
- The Michigan Nurses Association is taking volunteers for disaster relief work in Port-au-Prince.

In addition, National Nurses United, the 150,000-member nurses union of which MNA is a member, has activated its Registered Nurse Response Network. The network, which responded to Katrina, will send hundreds of nurses to Haiti.

"More than 2,000 registered nurses have already signed up to go to Haiti," said John Karebian, the association's executive director. "More nurses are needed, though. Even more important, money is needed for travel expenses and supplies. We call on the residents of Michigan to help send the nurses to Haiti through their donations."

- A group of 20 Wayne State University medical students, the school's chapter of the World Health Student Organization, planned to visit Haiti Feb. 25 to March 7.

“As soon the students heard about the earthquake you would have thought they would have been concerned about still going on the trip, but the reaction was the total opposite,” said Rosita Iordanova, a second-year medical student. “The students are even more motivated to go to Haiti and make a difference in people’s lives.”

Nonprofit WHSO is seeking donations of medicine, vitamins, condoms, pregnancy test kits, blood pressure cuffs and blood sugar measuring kits.

- Dexter-based ReCellular is helping the American Red Cross raise funds via used cell phones. The company is offering prepaid mailing labels to people who would like to donate used cell phones, and will give 100 percent of the phone value Red Cross. Prepaid labels are available at www.phonesforhaiti.com. announces \$2,000 match program to support American Red Cross efforts
- Brighton-based Executive Financial Planning is offering matching donations, up to \$2,000, to clients who donate to the American Red Cross. The match is available through Jan. 27.

Reporters Jay Greene, Sherri Welch and Bill Shea contributed to this report.

The Washington Post

Convert VHS tapes to DVD, donate old cellphones

By Jeanne Huber

Special to The Washington Post

May 27, 2010

Q. Do you know of a place that will convert VHS tapes to DVDs?

A. One business that welcomes small jobs is Fortex Audiovisual Services (202-269-2671), at 630 W St. NE. Owner Clarence Smith says the cost is \$25 for a single tape and about \$15 each if you have 10 or more.

Another option is Videofiles (703-524-8334, [http:// www.videofilesinc.com](http://www.videofilesinc.com)), at 1011 Arlington Blvd. in Arlington. This company charges by the length of the tape: \$20 for up to one hour, \$30 for one to two hours. If you have 10 or more tapes to convert, the price for each drops by a couple of dollars.

Q. Can you advise where I might turn in old used cellphones along with the corresponding cords, etc.?

A. The DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence accepts used cellphones. It distributes working phones to clients who are leaving abusive relationships, and it ships non-working phones to a recycling center that pays for them. The money goes to support the coalition's programs. Call 202-299-1181, Ext. 106, to arrange a donation time. Instructions for stripping your personal information from the phone are at <http://www.dccadv.org/celldrive.html>.

You can also help many other nonprofit groups by giving used cellphones to Charitable Recycling (<http://www.charitablerecycling.com>) or ReCellular (<http://www.recellular.com>). ReCellular's Web site lists deals available from some of its partners, such as getting a Best Buy coupon if you turn in a cellphone at one of the stores.



Cellphones needed for soldiers

August 5, 2010

Cell Phones for Soldiers and Hollywood Storage Center of Thousand Oaks are seeking donations of unused cellphones that will be recycled through ReCellular Inc.

Funds raised will be used to provide free calling cards to soldiers stationed overseas so they can call their families back home.

The goal is to collect at least 200 unused cellphones by October.

Residents can donate their unused cellphones at Hollywood Storage Center of Thousand Oaks, 3425 Old Conejo Road, Newbury Park.

Brittany Bergquist, 16, and her 15-year-old brother Robbie of Norwell, Mass, founded Cell Phones for Soldiers, a registered nonprofit organization that has raised nearly \$2 million and distributed more than 500,000 phone cards equaling 3 million minutes of talk time to soldiers serving overseas.

For more information, visit www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com.

San Francisco Chronicle

5 Steps to Safe Electronics Recycling

August 6, 2010

With the march of progress, many of us are frequently upgrading our electronics, or at least replacing those that stop working. But what about all those discarded gadgets? They often contain toxic materials, as well as valuable components that can be reused.

The Consumer Electronics Association offers several tips to reduce e-waste, while preserving your identity and sensitive information from would-be thieves. Let's take a look:

1. Turn in the Old

Most major consumer electronics manufacturers and many retailers have reliable, nationwide recycling programs. For instance, Best Buy's Take Back program, available in all of its U.S. stores, accepts all electronics, regardless of point-of-purchase. Also, many cities and towns have instituted community electronics recycling programs and events. Check out myGreenElectronics.org or the EPA's Website Plug-In to eCycling for a complete list of programs near your home.

Among the options: Dycern, a 2009 Heart of Green award winner, and numerous charity cell phone recyclers. Also consult The Daily Green's guide to recycling electronics.

2. Verify Your Recycler

There are several recognized certification programs for e-waste recyclers who are willing to use safe, market-driven recycling methods that respond to the needs of consumers, manufacturers and retailers, including the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries and the Industry Council for Electronic Equipment Recycling. It is also important for consumers to ask recyclers the process they use to minimize impacts to the environment and community, and to check for certifications on recyclers' Websites before engaging with them.

3. Pay It Forward

Donate your unwanted electronics to charity. CollectiveGood collects used cell phones and donates refurbished phones to underprivileged communities around the globe, while Close the Gap provides reused and refurbished computers to various developing countries.

4. Protect Your Identity

Recycling devices that store personal information, including computers and smart phones, can put you at risk for identity theft. However, there are many services that can help you erase your personal information from these devices, such as Symantec's Wipe Info in Norton Utilities and a free cell phone data eraser tool from Recellular.

5. Buy Green

Many electronics are made from recycled, eco-friendly, and biodegradable materials. Before making a purchase, research the product (and manufacturer) to find eco-friendly models. Many manufacturers post product descriptions online. When it comes to powering your new gadget, you can also minimize unnecessary waste (and get longer-lasting power) by opting for rechargeable batteries over disposable, whenever possible.

Cell phone recycler ReCellular lands venture capital investment from Beringea

By Nathan Bomey

October 11, 2010

Ann Arbor-based cell phone recycling firm ReCellular has secured a venture capital investment from the global investment firm that's managing the InvestMichigan! Growth Capital Fund.

Beringea said this morning that it had invested in ReCellular, which has some 280 employees at its headquarters in Ann Arbor and manufacturing operation in Dexter. It was the 17th investment for the InvestMichigan Growth Capital Fund, a \$185 million pool of state pension dollars that Beringea is investing in Michigan companies on behalf of the state.

The size of the investment was not disclosed, but officials said in a press release that it would "fund ReCellular's rapid growth and expansion into the global marketplace."

ReCellular collects some 400,000 mobile phones a month, refurbishes and resells about 70 percent of them and recycles most of the rest of the remaining materials, according to today's release.

"We are excited to partner with Beringea in building upon our nearly 20-year heritage in Michigan," ReCellular CEO Steve Manning said in a statement. "This investment will allow us to increase both the volume of phones we keep out of landfills and our contribution to Michigan's recovery."



Beringea Invests in Cleantech Company ReCellular

Matt Roush

October 11, 2010

Farmington Hills-based Beringea, Michigan's largest venture capital firm, has invested in ReCellular, a Dexter-based e-waste company specializing in the collection, reuse and recycling of used personal electronics, particularly mobile phones.

The investment, made through Beringea's InvestMichigan Growth Capital Fund, will help fund ReCellular's rapid growth and expansion into the global marketplace.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

This marks the 17th investment in the InvestMichigan Growth Capital portfolio.

Said ReCellular CEO Steve Manning: "This investment will allow us to increase both the volume of phones we keep out of landfills and our contribution to Michigan's recovery."

ReCellular, which employs 280 in Michigan, collects more than 400,000 mobile phones a month. Approximately 70 percent of those phones are refurbished and resold both domestically and worldwide; the rest are recycled for the precious metals, electronics and plastics that make up a phone. Phones are collected through partnerships with major mobile carriers, charities and large corporations and through direct purchases from consumers, and then sent to the company's Dexter plant for data removal and refurbishment or recycling.

In 2009, the company collected and processed five million phones for reuse and recycling, keeping more than 1.6 million pounds of solid and potentially harmful waste out of landfills.

"The proliferation of electronic devices over the past decade ... has created a massive and urgent environmental challenge, yet presents an attractive opportunity to companies that provide effective and reliable solutions," said Jeff Bocan, managing director for Beringea. "ReCellular has established itself as the cell phone recycling market leader and we are very excited to partner with its world-class team to help take the business to greater heights."

Beringea has more than 70 portfolio companies in the United States and United Kingdom, offices in London and Shanghai and more than 20 years of investing experience in a range of sectors, including health care and life sciences, clean technology, advanced manufacturing, media, Internet technologies and specialized consumer products.

Among its many initiatives, Beringea is co-manager of the \$185 million InvestMichigan Growth Capital Fund, which provides venture and expansion-stage capital to emerging businesses headquartered or with substantial operations in the state of Michigan. For more information, visit www.beringea.com or www.investmichiganfund.com.

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Hello again! Beringea make a call on ReCellular

By Julien Weston

October 12, 2010

Beringea, Michigan's largest venture capital firm, has invested in ReCellular, an Ann Arbor and Dexter, Michigan based electronic waste processor specializing in the collection, reuse and recycling of used personal electronics – especially all those old mobile phones – **currently an astonishing 400,000 a month.**

The investment, made through Beringea managed InvestMichigan! Growth Capital Fund, will help fund ReCellular's rapid growth and expansion into the global marketplace. Terms of the deal were not disclosed. This marks the 17th investment of the \$185m InvestMichigan! Growth Capital portfolio, which is funded by the state's pension funds.

"We are excited to partner with Beringea in building upon our nearly 20-year heritage in Michigan" said Steve Manning, CEO for ReCellular. "This investment will allow us to increase both the volume of phones we keep out of landfills and our contribution to Michigan's recovery."

Five million mobiles!

ReCellular employs around 280 staffers in Michigan. Some 70 percent of the phones it collects are refurbished and resold, both domestically and worldwide. The rest are recycled for the precious metals, electronics and plastics that make up a phone. Phones are collected through partnerships with major mobile carriers, charities and large corporations, also through direct purchases from consumers – and then sent to the company's Dexter, Mich. facility for data removal and refurbishment or recycling. In 2009, the company collected and processed five million phones for reuse or recycling, keeping more than 1.6 million pounds of solid and potentially harmful waste out of landfills.

"The proliferation of electronic devices over the past decade (cell phones, cameras, mp3 players, etc.) has created a massive and urgent environmental challenge, yet presents an attractive opportunity to companies that provide effective and reliable solutions" said Jeff Bocan, managing director for Beringea. "ReCellular has established itself as the cell phone recycling market leader and we are very excited to partner with its world-class team to help take the business to greater heights."

So now readers, you also know where to send all those old mobiles and mp3 players!



Beringea, Women's Angel Fund, and Resonant Venture Partners: An Investor Roundup

Gregory T. Huang

October 12, 2010

It's shaping up to be a busy week for Michigan venture capital and angel investment news.

—Dexter, MI-based ReCellular, an electronic waste company focused on collecting and recycling mobile phones, cameras, and other devices, said yesterday it has received an investment from Beringea. The amount of financing was not disclosed, but it was made through Beringea's \$185 million InvestMichigan Growth Capital Fund (this is the fund's 17th investment). ReCellular has 280 employees in Michigan and is led by CEO Steve Manning. The company says it collects more than 400,000 mobile phones per month, of which 70 percent are resold and the rest are recycled. Farmington Hills-based Beringea is Michigan's largest venture firm; it has more than 70 portfolio companies in the U.S. and U.K.

—The Michigan Women's Foundation, a statewide organization focused on supporting female-focused programs, said yesterday its board of trustees has approved the formation of a Women's Angel Fund that will provide investments in early-stage businesses owned or run by women. The program also will provide mentorship and professional support for female founders. Xconomy's editor-in-chief Bob Buderer had the scoop on the angel fund news in this in-depth profile of the Michigan Women's Foundation back in August. Financial details including the size of the fund and the size of individual investments have not been formally announced yet, although foundation CEO Carolyn Cassin told Bob investors will be asked to commit \$20,000 a year for five years to the fund.

—With all the gloom and doom around the venture capital industry, it's refreshing to see Michigan being among the 12 states having VC firms that raised money in the third quarter of 2010. That's according to a Thomson Reuters study put out yesterday by the National Venture Capital Association. Ann Arbor-based Resonant Venture Partners has a modest haul so far (a reported \$500,000 on its way to a targeted \$10-\$20 million). Last month, Bob posted a more complete list of Michigan venture firms that have recently closed funds or are raising funds now.

CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

Detroit and Southeast Michigan's premier business news and information website

Beringea invests in ReCellular

By Tom Henderson

October 12, 2010

Farmington Hills-based Beringea LLC is expected to announce today that it has made the latest investment from the InvestMichigan's Growth Capital Fund — in Dexter-based ReCellular Inc., a recycler of personal electronic products, especially cell phones.

The size of the investment won't be disclosed, but Beringea generally invests between \$3 million and \$10 million in individual deals. The money will be used to help expand ReCellular's sales abroad.

The company employs 280 and collects more than 400,000 mobile phones a month. Annual revenue is \$90 million.



Beringea invests VC in ReCellular

By Jon Zemke

October 14, 2010

The local venture capital hero has struck again, investing in another emerging business in southeast Michigan. Translate that to Farmington Hills-based Beringea, Michigan's largest venture capital firm, investing an undisclosed sum into ReCellular, the cell phone recycler based in Dexter.

This is the 17th investment from Beringea's InvestMichigan! Growth Capital portfolio. Beringea has grown that portfolio from \$150 million to \$180 million, primarily by investing in Michigan-based companies with cash from the State of Michigan Retirement System. Among those are Ferndale-based Livio Radio and Sakti3 of Ann Arbor earlier this year. More investments are on the way soon.

"I believe we will have more out there before the end of the year," says Michael Gross, managing director of Beringea.

ReCellular is the world's largest cell phone recycler. The company started out 19 years renting cell phones when they were a rare, expensive commodity. Once they become ubiquitous a decade ago, ReCellular overhauled its business plan to recycling and refurbishing the electronics.

The Dexter-based business now employs 300 people worldwide, including about 50 in Ann Arbor and 230 in Dexter. That facility handled about 5 million cell phones last year, of which approximately 70 percent were refurbished and resold. The rest were recycled for precious metals, keeping about 1.6 million pounds of toxic material out of landfills. Beringea sees an investment in ReCellular as a clean-tech play with considerable room for growth.

"The company has really evolved over the last few years," Gross says. "They have positioned themselves nicely."

Source: Michael Gross, managing director of Beringea



Recycle Your Cell Phone, Make a Political Donation at ReCellular

By Matt Roush

October 21, 2010

As the Nov. 2 election day approaches, politicians, candidates and non-profit lobbying organizations can receive donations when consumers recycle used cell phones through SecureTradeIn.com, powered by ReCellular, a Dexter-based e-waste company specializing in the collection, reuse and recycling of used personal electronics, particularly mobile phones.

ReCellular is the first to offer this newly approved fundraising option to political campaigns and their supporting consumers.

Approved by the Federal Elections Commission last week, candidates and other political groups can allow consumers to designate the proceeds from their recycled trade-in to be donated to their favorite candidate or cause. The proceeds could be anywhere from \$5 to \$400, depending on the type of cell phone recycled.

The Michigan League of Conservation Voters is among the first groups to sign up for the program. Michigan LCV, which works to turn environmental values into community priorities, distinguishes itself through its accountability work and is well-known as the publisher of the non-partisan Michigan Environmental Scorecard, which shows how Michigan legislators voted on conservation and clean energy issues.

"It's a fabulous way for us to make sure that cell phones are recycled," said Lisa Wozniak, executive director of the Michigan League of Conservation Voters. "It also helps us do good work and fulfill our mission while allowing consumers to support their cause or campaign without having to cut into their budgets."

Eligible participants include all registered federal candidates, regardless of party; political parties; 501(c)(4) non-profit lobbying organizations; and all non-connected political committees. Campaigns only need to pay a one-time \$10 listing fee to register as required by the FEC.

Currently, individuals can trade in their phones, receive a check and send it to the campaign they choose. Soon, the process will be seamless, with online consumers needing only to click a campaign to transfer the funds directly. It's not too late for consumers to lock in dollars from SecureTradeIn.com for their favorite campaigns; cell phones recycled through SecureTradeIn.com this week can still be contributed to help with the final push for candidates this coming election.

"Our charity donation program has been well-received, and this is a natural extension for political campaigns," said Steve Manning, CEO of ReCellular. "Funding is critical for campaigns, and this capability provides a twofold benefit of fundraising while recycling."

ReCellular, which employs 280 in Michigan, collects more than 400,000 mobile phones a month. Approximately 70 percent of those phones are refurbished and resold both domestically and worldwide; the rest are recycled for the precious metals, electronics and plastics that make up a phone. Phones are collected through partnerships with major mobile carriers, charities and large corporations and through direct purchases from consumers. Then they are sent to the company's Dexter, Mich., facility for data removal and refurbishment or recycling. In 2009, ReCellular collected and processed 5 million phones for reuse and recycling, keeping more than 1.6 million pounds of solid and potentially harmful waste out of landfills.

More at www.ReCellular.com.

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Getting rid of unwanted TVs, cell phones, computers

By Cameron Huddleston, Kiplinger

November 11, 2010

You might have read about the financial benefits of decluttering, such as the tax write-off you can get by donating old clothes to charity or the cash you can earn by selling items at a yard sale. But what do you do if you have old electronic gadgets that aren't easy to resell? Here are tips on how to sell, donate and recycle cell phones, computers, electronics and TVs:

Cell phones

Sell: Ship your old phone to flipswap.com in Torrance, Calif., and within a few weeks you'll receive a check. The Web site provides instructions for erasing data and preparing the phone for a new owner.

Donate: To search for a drop-off location, visit recellular.com. You can download a free data-eraser program.

Recycle: Find manufacturers' programs at recyclewirelessphones.com, the Web site of CTIA-The Wireless Association.

Computers

Donate: If your computer is less than 5 years old, prepare it for donation by visiting epa.gov for lists of refurbishers and disk-cleaning software. One refurbishing program, Reconnect, will accept any brand of computer equipment in any condition. To find a drop-off location, visit reconnectpartnership.com.

Recycle: If the computer is more than 5 years old or broken, recycle it. First remove the hard drive. To find a recycler, visit earth911.com.

Electronics

Sell: Gazelle.com will buy just about any type of electronic device, including computers and peripherals, game systems, MP3 players, digital cameras, satellite radios and GPS devices.

Recycle: Visit electronicsrecycling.org.

TVs

Recycle: Visit this EPA Web page: tinyurl.com/32rkx6r. Also, Best Buy stores will accept any brand up to 32 inches for a \$10 charge and will give you a \$10 gift card to offset the cost.



Electronics recycling: Dealing with skeletons in the closet

By Martin LaMonica

November 12, 2010

With America Recycles Day coming around on Monday, it's a good time to consider the impact of digital technology on waste.

It doesn't require too much imagination. Just visualize the obsolete cell phones, computers, TVs, modems, and tangle of wires sitting somewhere in your home--I suspect many of us have electronic stuff that's basically just baggage. The EPA estimates that nationwide there were 2.25 million U.S. tons of PCs, peripherals, TVs, and phones discarded in 2007, and e-waste is the fastest growing category of waste.

Now, think about what this tech equipment is made of. More than 1,000 materials go into the making of electronics, some of which are nasty chemicals, according to the Electronics Takeback Coalition. Heavy metals, including lead, mercury, and cadmium, are standard fare for the insides of TVs, computers, and other electronics, as well as brominated flame retardants in computers.

There are health risks during the production of these goods, but the greatest potential health impact is at the end of life, according to ETC. So to avoid getting these toxins from leaching at landfills or being burned at incinerators, it's important to recycle or donate them.

So what do you do? The first step is to collect and recycle the electronics you already have. That's getting easier to do, with more drop-off locations and online tools. But a lot more can be done, both to keep bad stuff out of the landfills and to reclaim valuable metals. In 2007, about 18 percent of TVs and PCs were recycled, and about 10 percent of cell phones were, according to the EPA.

The Electronics Takeback Coalition last month released its annual report card on how different consumer electronics and computer companies fare in their efforts to take back and recycle electronics. No company in any category got an "A" grade, and with the exception of Hewlett-Packard, printer companies in particular have a long way to go, it said.

Get the e-junk out

Cell phones are probably the easiest thing to donate or recycle, since many manufacturers will pay for shipping to return old phones and many stores now offer drop-off bins. Recellular will pay for your old phone and has handy instructions for how to erase personal data. Here is a list of few places where you can donate old phones.

If it's too old to be refurbished, you can drop it off for recycling at stores, such as Radio Shack, Best Buy, Office Depot, and Staples. You can also try Call2Recycle, which lists places to recycle cell phones and batteries.

Electronics stores have started taking bigger items back, too. Best Buy has drop-off bins for many things and will even offer TV and appliances pick-up services for a fee, which can be applied to a purchase. Staples has free take-back of computers, printer cartridges, and rechargeable batteries.

There are also company-specific take-back programs, including the Electronics Manufacturers Recycling Management company (MRM), which has a Web site that will show you where you can drop off electronics for recycling.

Of course, unburdening yourself of your old electronic gear isn't the only thing to consider. Thanks to more scrutiny of the

electronics recycling industry, many people are concerned about exporting e-waste to poor countries, where there can be serious health impacts.

There's now a certification for electronics recycling called the e-stewards program, which appears to be gaining a higher profile. But at this point, the concentration of certified e-cyclers is very thin--a number of states have none, while others have only a handful. To find other electronics recycling locations, check out this list from the National Center for Electronics Recycling.

“Green Moore’s Law” for Electronics

So for the electronics already taking up space at your house, there are options and they're growing. But many people believe that consumers--and more importantly manufacturers--need to think about disposal way before a product is even purchased.

Conceptually, that's a big shift. I suspect most people shopping for the latest Android phone or shiny laptop don't think much about what will happen when it's ready for replacing. But in these days of refreshing your phone and computer every couple of years--not to mention emerging categories, such as e-readers and tablets--it's worth thinking about the “end of life” for your gadgets and how different suppliers treat recycling and take-back.

You can check out Greenpeace's regular Guide to Greener Electronics, which rates different computer and consumer electronics manufacturers to pressure them to improve their policies. Also, the Green Electronics Council has a certification called EPEAT, which gives products, including PCs and other electronics, a gold, silver, or bronze rating based on several criteria.

Even if you don't consider the health and environmental impact of e-waste, it's worth looking into a take-back or resale program to get the residual value from your gadgets. Gazelle, for example, will give you a quick idea of how much your used gadget or cell phone is worth and will pay for shipping. Sprint earlier this year, working with eRecycling Corps, started offering a buyback program that gives you a credit for purchases.

These services reflect how more businesses are trying to make money by tapping into the giant e-waste stream we produce and consumers' increasing willingness to deal with used electronics.

Environmental activist Annie Leonard, who made the popular “Story of Stuff” video, earlier this week released the “Story of Electronics” animation. Like others, she argues that electronics manufacturers need to start designing for recycling and longer use, which she calls a “Green Moore’s Law.” She says manufacturers should continue the ongoing process of phasing out harmful chemicals, such as PVCs and bromide flame retardants, and design modular products so consumers can upgrade and repair electronics without having to entirely replace the product.

If you're serious about recycling, it's also worth tracking the progress of policies and regulations to increase recycling rates and limit exports.

In general, I try to buy durable, high-quality things that I plan on hold onto for a while. But even so, the refresh pace for electronics, particularly handheld gadgets, is picking up, not slowing down. Even our household lightbulbs are becoming electronics--in the form of LEDs. So next week after you take out the recycling bin, take a peek in your desk drawers and closets and get a gameplan for giving your electronic relics a second life.



Used Cell Phones Allow Identity Theft, Expert Says

Security Expert Says Used Cell Phones Contain Harmful Personal Information

November 30, 2010

DETROIT -- People should be thinking twice when donating or reselling old cell phones, a security expert said.

"Sometimes your phone number is almost as valuable as your Social Security number," said security expert Tom Berry.

WATCH: Cell Phones Could Contain Harmful Information, Expert Says

Berry said bad guys can pull off a number of scams such as identity theft or abduction.

"A lot of these phones go where? They go to foreign countries or second-world countries," Berry said. "Where does all the fraud start -- third-world countries."

Mike Newman is vice president at ReCellular in Ann Arbor. The company buys used phones from charities, individuals and companies, Newman said.

He said it was estimated that about 130 million cell phones are retired every year in the U.S.

"It's a huge mountain of phones," Newman said. "It's very easy to put company documents, a spread sheet or a business plan on a phone. You can put anything on a computer on a phone. Business secrets kept on your computer at work have the same content that can be left on your phone."

Newman said ReCellular has a multiple-tier system to make sure every phone is 100 percent clean when it leaves for resale.

"We process millions of phones through it and never had a leak of personal data," he said.

Linda McFarland, CEO at Paragon Green in Garden City -- a company that recycles used computers for individuals and companies -- said one her company's biggest services is wiping data off hard drives, personal devices and smart phones.

"People really need to this seriously," McFarland said. "They need to be more attentive to what they do to manage their data better on devices."

Both Newman and McFarland said deleting information can be done for free by following simple instructions online.

"The information on (your cell phone) can damage you," Berry said. "It can damage you bad. It can damage your family."

For information on how to delete information from your old phones and computers, visit these sites:

ReCellular.com

ParagonGreen.net



You Can Buy That Used? A Guide To Sensible Secondhand Purchasing

December 15, 2010

Getting great deals on gently used items is not a new concept, as thrift stores and consignment shops have been around for ages. But the Internet has brought forward a new age in thrifting, as buyers can browse items and connect with sellers more easily than ever. A number of online enterprises have also popped up for the sole purpose of peddling refurbished items at low prices.

Buying items secondhand presents its challenges, as sometimes wading through item after item of questionable quality can be grueling. But if you know the right places to look, you can get some serious deals on quality items in the blink of an eye or click of the mouse. While not everything lends itself to multiple uses, the following items promise great bargains to those who know the value in buying secondhand.

Cell phones: Keeping up with the latest trends in the mobile phone world can be exhausting - and expensive. Or if your phone breaks, you may find yourself having to sign a new contract with your provider to get a deal on a new one. The good news is websites like ReCellular offer discounted cell phones, including many recent models that have been refurbished. Getting a great deal on your own can free you from the restrictions an undesired contract and may beat any deal your provider can offer. Visit www.recellulartoo.com to see what types of gently used phones are available.

Computers: Since technology changes so rapidly, you may sometimes feel as though you paid way too much money for your new computer even a year or two after buying it. If you don't need all the latest features, buying a refurbished computer may be the way to go. Check to see if a business in your area sells refurbished computers or check manufacturers' websites to find out if they offer refurbished versions of their own products - all the better if a warranty is included.

Books: Because most people read a book only once, there are plenty of gently used copies of the next novel you hope to tackle available. Used books can often be had at half price or less. Check to see if there's a used bookstore in your area or visit an online marketplace. This is especially true for textbooks, as buying used can save hundreds of dollars for college students.

Tools: Simple tools are also items that won't wear down much over time. Items like shovels and hammers can be purchased for next to nothing at yard sales and thrift stores and will work just as well as new ones. A word of warning: Power tools aren't as sure of a bet, as they are more expensive and battery-powered tools in particular have a tendency to wear out more quickly.

Buying these items used is a great way to get the same satisfaction out of an item while saving money and reducing your environmental impact. As with buying new, the more homework you do before purchasing, the more confident you can be about getting a great product.