

HOPE Services Expands E-Waste to Wages Programming

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Headquartered in San Jose, Calif., producing AbilityOne® nonprofit HOPE Services is expanding electronic waste recycling organization-wide. HOPE's green services initiated as a pilot program through their Monterey County District's Electronic Waste to Wages (e-WTW) program. In September 2011, NISH's Ideas to Work Fund Program awarded HOPE a \$100,000 grant to expand their e-WTW Monterey County District program's service area to HOPE's additional four service districts, which span from south of the San Francisco Bay through the Monterey Bay Area.

In order to ensure the necessary market demand for expanding e-WTW to their other district offices, HOPE enlisted the support of the Stanford Alumni Consulting Team to conduct a market analysis of the local electronic waste supply. Conservative estimates from the analysis revealed that the average person produces about 22 pounds of e-waste per year. Coupled with U. S. Census Bureau data estimating the counties of Santa Clara and San Mateo at 2.5 million residents, HOPE concluded that these two counties in its service area produce about 55 million pounds of e-waste on a yearly basis, which is more than enough to sustain HOPE's recycling program growth. Local recycling competitors also do not offer a benefit back to organization's providing e-waste, as HOPE does. Additionally, the current favorable market for the metals used in electronics will only aid the economic viability of HOPE's e-WTW expansion.

e-WTW was developed as a partnership program for collecting e-waste with local non-profit organizations, schools (K-12 and colleges), compa-

nies, and government agencies. After forming a partnership via a memorandum of understanding with a specific organization, HOPE works with the organization to promote and hold at least four e-waste collection events per year at the organization's site. At the collection events, HOPE's workers, who are paid minimum wage, collect and sort e-waste for sale to a state-approved e-waste recycler. HOPE is committed to e-stewardship and the data security of the electronic items that are donated. The e-waste recycler refines the e-waste to recapture various electronic components and the hard drives are sanitized to eliminate data risk. Zero materials are sent overseas.

HOPE's e-WTW program is a particular boon to partnering schools and disabilities advocates. HOPE's Monterey District currently holds partnerships with eight school districts in Monterey County, representing approximately 50,000 students. Eighty percent of proceeds generated from these e-waste events are transferred back to the schools in the form of job credits performed by HOPE clients. Partner schools determine which work areas might best suit their current needs, like grounds maintenance or custodial work, and HOPE's employees are paid minimum wage to perform these services.

The e-WTW events bring environmental stewardship and people with disabilities to the center stage. The program helps dispel negative myths about people with disabilities and



Left to right: HOPE staff member Luis Garcia and client-employee Joaquin Villagomez post a sign for an e-WTW event at an elementary school.



Left to right: Dante Del Bono, Paul Burnham, John Kubik, Robert Witt, and e-Waste to Wages Specialist Lindsay Boyce sort e-waste at HOPE's Monterey District Office.

teaches the students and school staff that many people with disabilities can work and contribute to their communities. HOPE has started providing disability awareness training to local schools that may improve negative stereotypes associated with students with disabilities. e-WTW also allows HOPE to develop some of their most significantly disabled clients in terms of work experience and thereby increase their productivity for future work opportunities.

Monterey District employee Jock Mayes has worked in sorting and collecting

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The Nonprofit Agency Link

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e-waste in HOPE's e-WTW program for over a year.

Mayes' job is important to him because he wants to be a wage-earner and a contributing member of the community. "You don't work, you don't have no roof on your head. You don't have a car to drive to work. . . . You see people like panhandling and that ain't right, because they should earn their money. HOPE is a wonderful place to work." Mayes' goal is to eventually work at the sheriff's department, where his father is employed, and use e-WTW as secondary employment.



HOPE Services' client-employees collect and sort e-waste at the U.S. Geological Services, Menlo Park.

The e-WTW program also offers green partnership and informal disability awareness opportunities for HOPE's AbilityOne government agency project sites. HOPE has performed custodial services for the General Services Administration (GSA) at the U.S. Geological Services (USGS) in Menlo Park since 1993, and seven persons with developmental disabilities currently work on this contract. Recently, HOPE partnered with GSA to hold an e-waste collection event

at the USGS, Menlo Park. In April, HOPE's Monterey District held a collection event at the Monterey Naval Postgraduate School where 25 AbilityOne workers perform custodial services.

HOPE maximizes their e-WTW program's impact by collecting e-waste and recyclable household goods and clothing in a variety of

ways. HOPE actually receives more electronic waste from walk-in drop off than at its organized collection events. Household goods and clothing are sold to a private company that operates thrift stores. According to HOPE's Green Business Solutions Director, John Bell, customer service is the key to maintaining HOPE's business relationships and remaining competitive against other service providers. "HOPE's competitive advantage is our responsiveness, our concentration on customer service and making recycling with HOPE a good experience."

The expansion of HOPE Services Monterey District's e-Waste to Wages represents an innovative and sustainable work opportunity for persons with significant disabilities to earn wages and contribute to the environmental health of their communities. This green initiative also creates favorable public relations through HOPE's e-WTW partnerships with schools, government agencies, and local organizations. In the future, HOPE Services looks forward to expanding their green services to additional locations, state and nationwide. ★

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Korell. "They'll work a half day then come and relax or do a craft." Others may spend the entire day there, staying occupied, engaged, earning a sense of accomplishment. Often times, those who start in the Day Habilitation Program move on to work in the facility.

The Chesapeake Center not only employs people on site, they work to place people in the community. "When we approach potential employers," says Korell, "we like to focus on what they can do, not what they can't." Currently, five people from the Center are placed in jobs throughout the community.

"The Chesapeake Center feels like a family environment," says the young woman with bi-polar disorder. Her life's course was changed because of the efforts of the non-profit's staff. Had it not been for that family style support and gentle pressure to push herself to achieve, her story along with the stories of many others would have had less than a happy ending. ★