



Business

Going green with electronics

[Print Page](#)

By **DAVID EVERMAN** Special Sections Editor

Published: Friday, October 16, 2009 6:46 AM CDT

An e-cycling event Wednesday will be the kickoff for a collaboration between the Talbot Chamber of Commerce's environmental committee and Chesapeake Center Inc.

"One of our goals is to help expose all the businesses in our county who sell green products or promote green products so the community can take advantage of the them," said Suzanne Pittinger-Slear, chairman of the environmental committee and vice-chairman of the chamber's board of directors. Pittinger-Slear is president of Environmental Concern in St. Michaels.

"Our first goal is to let them know there is a committee and our second goal is to make people aware you can recycle electronic products at Chesapeake Center," she added. "A lot of folks don't know that you can take electronics there."

Chesapeake Center Inc. is an organization that provides residential, vocational day services, adult medical daycare services and individual support services to developmentally disabled adults. It is at 713 Dover Road, next to the auto parts store on the west side of U.S Route 50.

The Wednesday event starts at 10 a.m. and runs until 2 p.m.

"The center will accept computers, cameras, desktop printers, scanners and all other electronic peripherals," said Al Silverstein, president of the Talbot Chamber of Commerce.

There is no cost to recycle the appliances, except for televisions (\$15) and computer monitors (\$10), which have lead in the picture tubes.

"There will be signs out and people will not even have to get out of their cars," Pittinger-Slear said. "They can pop their trunks and we can take the things out."

Some vendors will also be present to give out bags and some free promotional materials.

"We look forward to the community's coming out and taking part in this effort to recycle."

Wednesday's event is a first for the Talbot Chamber, but Silverstein said the chamber hoped to make it an annual event. "A lot of people say to us, 'We have a lot of old electronics, and we don't want to throw them into the garbage, so what should I do?'" he said.

In addition to sponsoring the e-cycling day at Chesapeake Center, the environmental committee puts out a quarterly newsletter for chamber members offering tips on recycling, Silverstein said.

"We want to let them know of member businesses with green practices and recycling companies," he added. "We're looking for opportunities to get the work out on how to be better stewards."

The chamber committee is trying to find a corporation that will donate enough money to pay for the disposal of 200 monitors and televisions, Pittinger-Slear said.

"It's time for people to start looking around their offices," she added. "In our offices, we have a graveyard of monitors, printers and computers we don't know what to do with. The worst thing you can do is put them in the trash."

Lisa Korell, vocational service director at Chesapeake Center, said the center started recycling electronics last year. "We've just started accepting donations at our facility," she said.

The center partners with cdm eCycling, a Baltimore firm, which processes the materials.

The center has a crew of nine or 10 that disassembles the appliances and stores the parts in separate cardboard boxes, segregating plastics, metal, wires, motherboards and the rest of the parts.

"Once we get all of that done, the the company in Baltimore will come and get them from us," Korell said. "Then they recycle it. All the scrap goes right to them even the outside community donations because it's not going in landfills."

Korell stressed the importance of the e-cycling program, both to Chesapeake Center and to the community as a whole.

"We'd like people to know there's a place to drop off these recyclables, and to keep developmentally disabled people employed," Korell said.

"I think it's important for people to know that the more people bring us, the more work we can offer our people," she noted. "Plus, we're keeping the materials out of the landfill and providing a service to the community."

Of course, recycling electronics is not the only way a business can make a green difference. Some businesses focus on their own products.

"The last two years our carpet cleaning solutions have been non-toxic, safe for pets and kids," said Vance Morris of Wicomico ChemDry. "A few of our other products are green as well.

"The solutions have no additives, no phosphates, surfactants or soaps. They're all ingredients you can find in nature," he said. However, his company can't call the solution all-natural. "There is one mineral in it," he said, "but that's a proprietary secret."

Morris said that he had made a conscious decision on what company's products he would use. "It has high ethical standards," he said. "When choosing a business, that was at the top of my list."

He is also ready to show a potential customer that the cleaning solution he uses is non-toxic. "If a customer says 'Prove it,' I'll pour some of the solution into my hand and drink it," he explained. "I've had to do that six times in the last two years.

"Half the time, I think they're kidding, but I always call their bluff on it."

Another product he sells a pet urine stain treatment is also green, and is based on enzymes. "The enzymes' entire life is devoted to eating urine crystals," Morris said. "Once they're eaten and digested the crystals, they convert it to gas." The gas then dissipates into the atmosphere.

The hard-working enzymes can remove the odor-producing crystals within a day, Morris said.

"Urine on its own takes five years to out-gas," he said. "We've got that down to 24 hours."

Cutting energy use is another way to be green, said Matt Hargrove, president/owner of Total Home Performance, who said his business has been transformed into a full-service weatherization service.

His company performs energy assessments he said the term "energy audits" scared people.

"We're also contractors for the state of Maryland doing all the weatherization air sealing, insulation, waterproofing, energy-efficient lightbulbs and low-flow shower heads," he said.

"People who make under a certain income level are eligible for up to \$6,500 of free weatherization."

The assessments and weatherization help cut utility bills and increase comfort levels in the home, he said.

"We're consultants for the whole home, looking at total home performance," he said.