

# Teen Honored for Stepping into Recycling Gap: 'E-Waste' Program Accepts Tech Products

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It was Nick Morgan's parents, Kirstin and Daniel, who inspired him to appreciate the environment. The family ski trips to the Rocky Mountains made him realize the fragility of the planet and the importance of preserving it. It was the D.C. government, however, that inspired him to work for it.

The long lines and limited hours of the city's biannual hazardous waste and electronics collection day, Morgan decided, were "really not sufficient. You have to get up at the crack of dawn just to get through the lines. It's a hassle." So two years ago, the then-junior at the Maret School in Northwest Washington started his own recycling program, e-Waste Recycling.

Beginning small, Morgan set up bins at Maret for the school community to recycle ink cartridges, cell phones, PDAs and laptops. For every item he boxed and sent to Cartridges for Kids, a Colorado-based recycling program that raises money for schools and nonprofit groups, he received 5 cents and free shipping. He amassed \$1,842 and donated it to Susan G. Komen for the Cure, an organization dedicated to combating breast cancer.

The program was so successful that he decided to expand it to the greater Washington community, publicizing it on D.C. and Maryland Internet discussion boards and opening his house as a drop-off point. "Things started pouring in," he said, as did e-mails from people wanting to drop off larger items such as computer hardware.

He partnered with Access Recycling, which said it would take 60 monitors or printers at a time with no charge for shipping. "The demand was high enough," Morgan said, standing by a pile of about 10 monitors assembled on a pallet and wrapped in heavy-duty plastic.

At the height of his recycling program last fall, Morgan received about 10 monitors a day, stacking them to the ceiling in his basement. He came back from visiting colleges to find 60 monitors on his front porch. "It really shows that there really is a high demand,"



Morgan said. He continued to accept smaller items, too, including scanners, copiers and fax machines.

The teenager also made about 50 pickups, renting a van and filling it with the recyclables. The only fee was the \$8 per monitor that Access Recycling charged him for disposing of the harmful materials.

Eight times, a 32-foot truck backed into the alley behind the house in Tenleytown for the shipment. “By my senior year, it started to be almost a business,” he said. “It really snowballed, which was good.”

Morgan also began working with First Time Computers, a D.C. company that fixes old computers for low-income individuals and groups. Although he has worked with large businesses that want to recycle their computers, he said “as one person, I can only do so much,” and has had to turn away a lot of items.

Now a freshman at Kenyon College, Morgan has scaled back his program. At Thanksgiving, he had about 60 computers awaiting shipment in his garage and driveway. After more than two years, he figured he has spent about 300 to 350 hours on e-Waste Recycling, printing fliers, posting reminders, answering e-mails, and stacking, wrapping and shipping the materials. This year, he was one of 10 young people in the country to win the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes for environmental stewardship. He has recycled more than 40,000 pounds of “e-Waste,” including more than 900 monitors.



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Nick Morgan, who started his program as a high school junior, sits on a stack of old computers waiting to be recycled.

“People have stuff in their attics, and here you come with this service. It really makes you think,” Morgan said. If the government is going to offer a recycling service, he said, “they should offer something that meets the needs of the people.”