



## Freecycling to the Rescue

USA Today: December 21, 2004

By Janet Kornblum, USA TODAY



When 5-year-old Kinley Doud inspected her grandmother's house a few weeks before Christmas, she noticed something crucial was missing.

Kinley, her little sister and her mother, Amy Doud of Hampton, Va., will be spending Christmas with her "grammy" while her father, who is in the Navy, is deployed as part of the war in Iraq.

"How's Santa going to get in?" she asked. "We don't have a fireplace. We don't have a chimney."

Fortunately, her mom just happens to be a member of an e-mail group called Freecycle, in which people across the USA are giving their neighbors all sorts of stuff free. That week, Doud got an electric fireplace there.

Kinley thought that was great. "Now Santa can get in."

The Douds aren't the only ones to have benefited from the kindness of strangers. Hurricane victims in Florida and needy families in Virginia are among others who have received help from people they don't know because they found each other online.

Freecycle was launched in May 2003 by an environmentalist in Tucson. He wanted to encourage people to recycle instead of throwing things away when they didn't want them anymore. Now it appears to be inspiring a grass-roots altruistic trend across the USA that includes new giveaway sites such as Virginia Beach-based Angels in Action.

Cars, clothing, toys, refrigerators, washing machines, food — just about anything that can be carried or

moved has been offered and taken through Freecycle, through one of its spinoffs, or through other community sites such as Craigslist.

"Going into it, I really thought it was a tree-hugger sort of thing," Freecycle founder Deron Beal says. "I thought other tree huggers would say, 'OK, this is a chance to keep stuff out of landfills.' But what I've found is much broader-based."

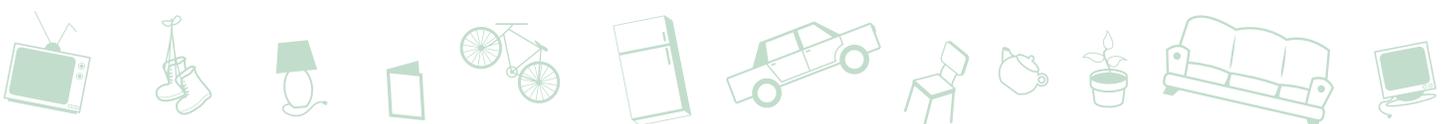
Freecycle might never rival eBay, where people sell their stuff rather than give it away. But more than 700,000 people have used Freecycle in nearly 2,000 cities, most of them in the USA. Each community has its own e-mail list.

"In some sort of strange, psychological way, it appeals to that little piece of 'good I can do' for each of us," Beal says. Freecycle works because of "that one inspiring moment when you see someone driving off with something you've given them. It's such a fulfilling moment that people keep giving."

Sherrie Cagle has taken that to an extreme. Cagle was a regular Freecycle member who decided she wanted to do more.

Freecycle allows members to post specific items to give away or specific items they need. But Cagle wanted a list on which she could collect all sorts of goods from community members and donate them to needy families. So she launched a separate e-mail group, Angels in Action, to do that.

The more than 200 "angels" collect clothing, furniture, food and even diapers from all sorts of sources, including friends, family, neighbors — and Freecyclers.





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People find out about the group strictly through word-of-mouth. The group aims to help families in the Hampton Roads, Va., area get “over the hump” of financial or other problems, Cagle says.

Cagle says about 100 families have been helped through the network; she and other “angels” have adopted 10 local families for Christmas, as they did on Thanksgiving. Much of the stuff they collect is used. But some volunteers are purchasing new gifts with their own money.

As with Freecycle, everything is based on the honor system. If people want to cheat by saying they’re needy when they aren’t, they can. But Cagle, 38, who plans to get non-profit status as soon as she can afford to file for it, is convinced that people are being honest.

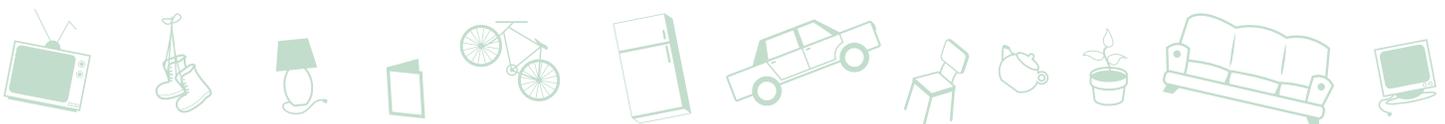
“I had little cards made up and I write ‘people helping people,’ Cagle says. “I don’t want anyone to feel like we’re looking down on them, because we’re not. I’ve been in the situation where I had \$5 at Christmastime and I got fired from a job the day after Thanksgiving. I want to help people because I know how it feels.”

Many who receive items through Angels in Action or Freecycle also turn around and give.

Some of the items people give are small. And some are pretty big.

Deb Young and her husband, who were devastated by two Florida hurricanes and moved back to their home state of Maine, said they received a 13-year-old minivan — no strings attached — from a man who posted the giveaway on Freecycle. He told them he was touched by their story, Young says.

“As corny as it sounds, the Freecycle movement really gave us so much hope that people can really be nice to each other. There are people out there that are willing to help other people.”





## Want? Want not? Waste? NOT!

MOTHERING MAGAZINE: January 05, 2005

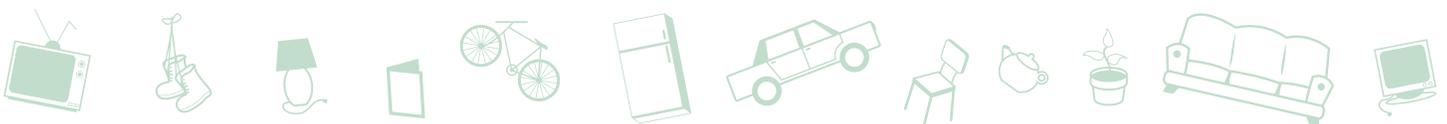
Get a leg up on recycling by going directly to the source, and freecycling. Based on the maxim that "one persons trash is another persons treasure", [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org) utilizes the enormous networking capacity of the internet to link givers and takers. Completely and adamantly outside of the cash economy, the non-profit site is a clearinghouse for Yahoo! Groups across the globe, that function locally to connect nearby residents to exchange free items. Following detailed instructions provided by the site, volunteer moderators oversee and monitor the postings in each area group.

## Mothering

THE MAGAZINE OF NATURAL FAMILY LIVING

Created in May, 2003, to divert items from the Tucson, Arizona waste stream, the grassroots organization has grown to serve over 1,700 communities, with over half a million freecyclers.

Logon and join an existing group, or start one, in your community. Help your family and your neighbors to live more simply by de-cluttering and sharing your abundance, and also by seeing what free options are out there before you open your wallet and buy more stuff.





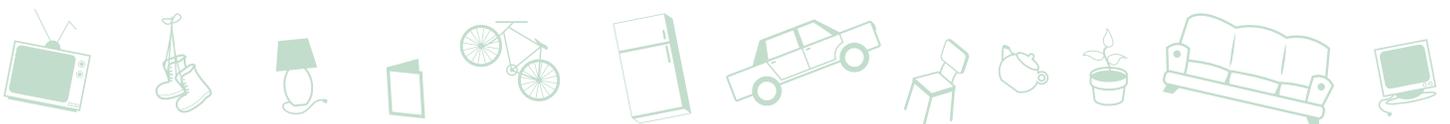
## Forum Recycles Used Items for Free

CBS MARKETWATCH: December 25, 2004



Marshall Loeb's Daily Money Tip: Free-cycling movement gains momentum - Personal Finance

Forum recycles used items for free  
By Marshall Loeb, CBS.MarketWatch.com





## Recycling as a Matter of Give and Take

THE WASHINGTON POST: July 15, 2004

The Washington Post

By Christina Lanzito, Special to THE WASHINGTON POST

These are a few things that bother me: an oversized ceramic piggy bank, a baby's sun-bleached bouncy seat, a pair of ski pants circa 1985. None worth selling, all too potentially useful to take to the dump.

But because I'm far too lazy to organize a yard sale and far too dismayed by waste to blithely trash it all, I have developed an odd habit of placing such things carefully beside the dumpster. Maybe someone passing by could use a \$5 flower vase or a pretty wall calendar from 2002. If not, the thing still could end up in a garbage dump and I could go on believing it had found a happy home.

Then a few months ago I stumbled upon what seems to be the perfect solution to such quandaries: FreecycleDC, a give-and-take Internet service that delivers the castoffs of our lives to grateful new owners. In the past nine months, the Yahoo-based message board has become a world unto itself. Members - of which there are more than 1,500 and counting in the Washington area - sign up to receive listserv postings from fellow "freecyclers" with subject lines that usually begin "offer" or "wanted." As in "OFFER: plastic leis" and "WANTED: bowling balls." Or "OFFER: organic wood chips for mulching" and "WANTED: Pond and pond supplies."

The No. 1 rule is that everything must be absolutely free. No money involved.

FreecycleDC, which hit the Internet last October at [groups.yahoo.com/group/FreecycleDC/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FreecycleDC/) is one of many offshoots of the mother site, [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org), started a little over a year ago by Deron Beal.

Beal, 37, works for a recycling and job-training organization in Tucson that had accumulated many used but useful items that could not be recycled. So he set up the message board to find the nonprofits that might

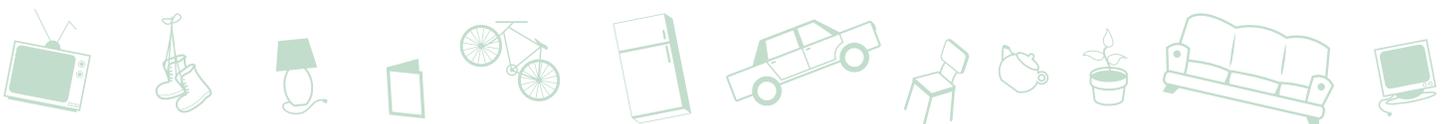
want them. Through freecycling, he says, "you can help a Third World country." For example, he has contacted World Care, a Tucson-based group that collects humanitarian supplies for Iraq, to suggest that the next time there's a calamity and people need something, "blankets or whatever," Freecycle.org could help.

There are now hundreds of spinoff groups, including 30-plus in Virginia (Arlington, Dulles Corridor, Fairfax, Warrenton) and 13 in Maryland (Columbia, Frederick, Baltimore). Beal says there are about 10 new message boards popping up around the world every day (at last check, 28 members in Bangalore, India; 23 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia). All can be accessed through [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org).

Melanie Parr Cardell, 30, a graphic designer and part-time courier in Baltimore, discovered the Washington listserv in March. She now volunteers as the lead moderator of FreecycleDC, and has become an enthusiastic proselytizer for freecycling. The concept is "win-win," she says. "I can't think of a single thing wrong with it."

She has given away an ottoman, a 30-gallon aquarium, a roll of bulk-rate stamps, a bike helmet and the three-speed bike she rode as an 8-year-old. She has acquired, among other things, a wood chipper, a clothes dryer, an out-of-tune piano, and a carburetor for her 1967 VW Beetle. She and her husband helped a woman in Silver Spring get rid of a fallen oak tree by chopping it up and hauling it away for firewood.

It's "the free version of eBay," says Angela Guzman, 27, an office administrator and volunteer moderator of the Arlington message board. Members tend to be ardent about freecycling, citing environmental, practical and financial concerns, and a feeling of community. "Like a family passes unneeded items on to other family members," wrote one woman, "this board, in a sense,





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fills that void in our lives.”

Moderators, all volunteers, oversee the exchange of messages and can reject misguided postings.

Founder Beal wrote in an e-mail that a good moderator is critical to the success of the listserv. “The local mod,” he says, should be “super nice and establish a good local giving community where everyone gets the concept, follows the basic rules and are nice to each other. It’s all about nice.”

He also acknowledges that safety can be an issue for those who are dropping off an item at a stranger’s house or giving their address to others they don’t know.

“If someone has a concern,” Beal added, “we advise they either just leave the item on the front porch when they are gone or meet in a public place. The worst thing that could happen is that someone could steal it from the porch, right? Less worse thing is that the darn thing sits there for a week before someone picks it up, like the flippers on my front porch as we speak.”

Cardell says she rejected a message from someone who offered to pay for a baby stroller. Ignore the “free” in freecycling at your peril.

There is a definite freecycling etiquette. After something has been claimed -- first come, first served in theory, but actually at the discretion of the donor -- the donor is supposed to post a TAKEN notice. Many wait, however, until the item has been picked up and might keep a “waiting list” in case the first person doesn’t follow through.

Excessive WANTED postings are frowned upon, and sometimes prompt debates that begin with postings like “Too many greedy [expletive] are posting WANTED

posts for things they are just too cheap to buy!” Some WANTEDs seem good-natured though a bit unrealistic, like the guy who wrote, “Looking for NY Yankees tickets preferably against Boston Red Sox. 2 or more if available. Thanks!!” At least he was polite. Often WANTED postings don’t conclude with a “thank you,” which seems a bit tacky. Beal advises moderators to block WANTED postings for such things as digital cameras and DVD players. “You’re always going to get someone saying, ‘I want a Hummer,’” he sighs. That’s not to say that eye-popping stuff isn’t offered. Last week there was “Grand Piano, nice condition, free to whoever moves it out!” from a man in Towson, Md. “Too big to keep and we don’t play it.”

A former New York City police officer who now lives in Virginia, identified as Alex online, has given away three decommissioned police cars, and plans to donate two minivans and four more cars by the end of the year. “I pick what I feel to be the most needy family,” he wrote in an e-mail. “I will not give to single guys or people that just want an extra car, or teens with nothing better to do than speed and drive like idiots :)”

Deborah Cole, 40, of Severn, who describes herself as a “home-school mommy,” has signed on to the Baltimore, Annapolis and Columbia groups. She’s given away car seats, magazines and an old couch that was, as she puts it, “not particularly cosmetically appealing.” Her husband was about to take it to the dump, but she had a sudden change of heart and asked him to leave it behind.

“By the time he got back from the dump,” she says, “I had not only posted it, someone had already come to pick it up. It was thrilling for me.”

