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## CROSSROADS INDUSTRIAL SERVICES LEADS LOCAL RECYCLING EFFORTS

*Cara L. Klaer, Communications Specialist, Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce*

Use the next 30 seconds to look around your current surroundings.

It's probably a safe bet that somewhere in your reach is an old book that you have read and enjoyed, but now sits unused on your desktop or shelf. Have you ever thought about what to do with that book? You could take it to a half-off book store and try to get money for it, you could attempt to sell it online, or you could recycle it. Of all the options, the latter is the easiest to carry out, and it's something that a local company has created a business around.

Crossroads Industrial Services started recycling books in May, in collaboration with their partner “Giggil” (green is good, good is less). In just eight months, they have processed almost half a million books. That's 25,000 books a month, or 2,000 books a day! In addition, other recycling, assembly, packaging, and fabrication services take place throughout their 68,000 square foot facility, located at the crossroads of I-70, I-69, I-74 and I-465.

The process is fairly simple. Giggil and Crossroads receive books that have been donated to local libraries, or charitable organizations like the Salvation Army. The books come in from as far away as Texas, and as close as Carmel, Indiana. The books are of all different genres- health, fiction, science, non-fiction, memoirs, thrillers, and romance novels. Whatever their genre, new or old, they all arrive, ready to be processed at Crossroads' facility on East 33rd Street in Indianapolis. The value proposition allows the book donors, usually not-for-profits and Giggil to generate an income and Crossroads to provide jobs for people with disabilities.

“Often times I walk through and see books of great interest to me. It's hard not to stop and start reading. We receive a lot of fascinating books and we're happy that many of them will continue to provide enjoyment, and for those books that are too old or worn, we feel good about the fact that they are being recycled to help the environment,” says Curtiss Quirin, Chief Operating Officer at Crossroads Industrial Services.

Crossroads operators scan the barcode on the back of each book that comes in. Using software developed by Giggil, they are then able to compare and value the book, based on demand and condition. If the book is of value, it will be sold on Amazon.com. If the book is of low value and cannot be sold online, it will be sold to a half price book store. If the book has no value, it will be condensed to paper pulp.

The latest recycling initiative has employees feeling good about the work they do each day. “At Crossroads, staff morale is high because everyone is making a positive impact on the community and the environment,” says Project Manager Jeff Gore.

Crossroads does not stop at book recycling. Five months ago, they expanded their recycling program to also include polystyrene, a packaging material you might find when you purchase a new appliance such as a television, dishwasher or vacuum. A white substance, polystyrene is often found in the corner or the base of new products packaging. Crossroads is partnering with Gateway and Wal-Mart to recycle this material.

The benefit to begin recycling polystyrene stems from the fact Crossroads is conveniently located next door to one of the largest Wal-Mart return centers in the United States. The Indianapolis return center handles about 800 Wal-Mart stores and 150 Sam's Club centers. The partners collaborated and decided it would benefit the community to begin recycling the packaging material. Instead of having consumers drive to a recycling facility, Crossroads takes the guesswork out and works directly with Wal-Mart and Sam's Club to recycle the polystyrene before the packaging even gets into the consumers' hands.

Wal-Mart has a great stake in the process. Wal-Mart employees remove the polystyrene packaging from their products before selling them to consumers. They then transport the polystyrene to Crossroads' facility. At Crossroads, they have employees ready to sort the material, along with the machines needed to compact the material. Workers sort the many pieces of polystyrene and place them on a conveyor belt, the polystyrene inches upwards, where finally at the top, it falls into a machine where it is shredded, compacted and transformed into a dense log. The logs are then loaded on to skids, where they will await the next leg of their journey. One tractor trailer full of loose polystyrene is equivalent to about one skid of compacted material. Ultimately, the compacted material is sold to a picture frame company in Wisconsin. There, they re-process the compacted material into poster art and pictures frames. It is no coincidence that the frames are then sold at Wal-mart stores across the country.

“It's a circle of sustainability,” Quirin says. “Wal-Mart wins because they are not putting the polystyrene into landfills, Crossroads wins because we are able to increase our workforce, and the picture frame company wins because this is a source of low-cost raw material. At our current rate of production we are processing more than 150,000 pounds of polystyrene per year that would have gone into the landfill and this is just the beginning.”

Crossroads is only five months into polystyrene recycling, but already the response has been overwhelming. So much so, that they recently purchased a larger, more efficient machine that can handle the compacting of more material at once. Crossroads is also adding more workers to facilitate the recycling. Both recycling programs have each generated five jobs for workers with disabilities.

Crossroads Industrial Services is a division of Easter Seals Crossroads. More than 86 percent



*Jeff Gore, Project Manager and Curtiss Quirin, Chief Operating Officer (pictured left to right)*

of employees at Crossroads have some form of disability, and the income the company generates is used to support disability services at Easter Seals Crossroads for those who cannot work.

“At Crossroads we look at a person's ability, rather than their disability” says Jim Vento, President of Easter Seals Crossroads. People that have good cognitive skills, but may have a mobility issue are utilized in the book recycling program, whereas people with stronger physical skills take on the polystyrene recycling.

“We have an extensive recruiting and training process. Our employees range in age from their 20s to their 70s. What they all have in common is their tremendous work ethic, their desire to be here each day, to do good work and become self sufficient,” said Quirin. “They are part of a culture of social entrepreneurship here at Crossroads that they wouldn't find at other companies.”

It's that culture that is paving the way for future recycling projects.

Next time you look around your surroundings, think about the myriad items that can be recycled. Think about the many ways you can begin to make an impact on the world in which you live. Think about the workers at Crossroads that are committed to changing the face of tomorrow by turning old, gently-used, everyday items into another man's treasure. It's thought-provoking. It's humbling. Perhaps it will serve to inspire you.

Crossroads Industrial Services is ISO 9001 registered, and FDA registered for handling medical devices. They employ “lean manufacturing” principles and have a quality system and process controls in place. Crossroads manufactures products, fabricates metal, packages, and fulfills orders for companies like: Von Duprin, Metro Plastic, Herff Jones, Westvaco, Skydex, Arrow Container, NAPA, and the Department of Defense.

To learn more about Crossroads Industrial Services, visit:

<http://www.crossroadsindustrialservices.com>.

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