



From Bins to Wins: Strategies to Boost your Recycling Engagement

Ryan Buhay
Amelia Kovacs

Doug Bair
Christy Turner

Chandra Valenza



Digital Connections, Real-World Impact: Where Tech Meets Outreach

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Recycle Coach
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Summit for Recycling - Grand Junction, Colorado - June 2nd-4th, 2025

About me: Recycling Nerd Extraordinaire

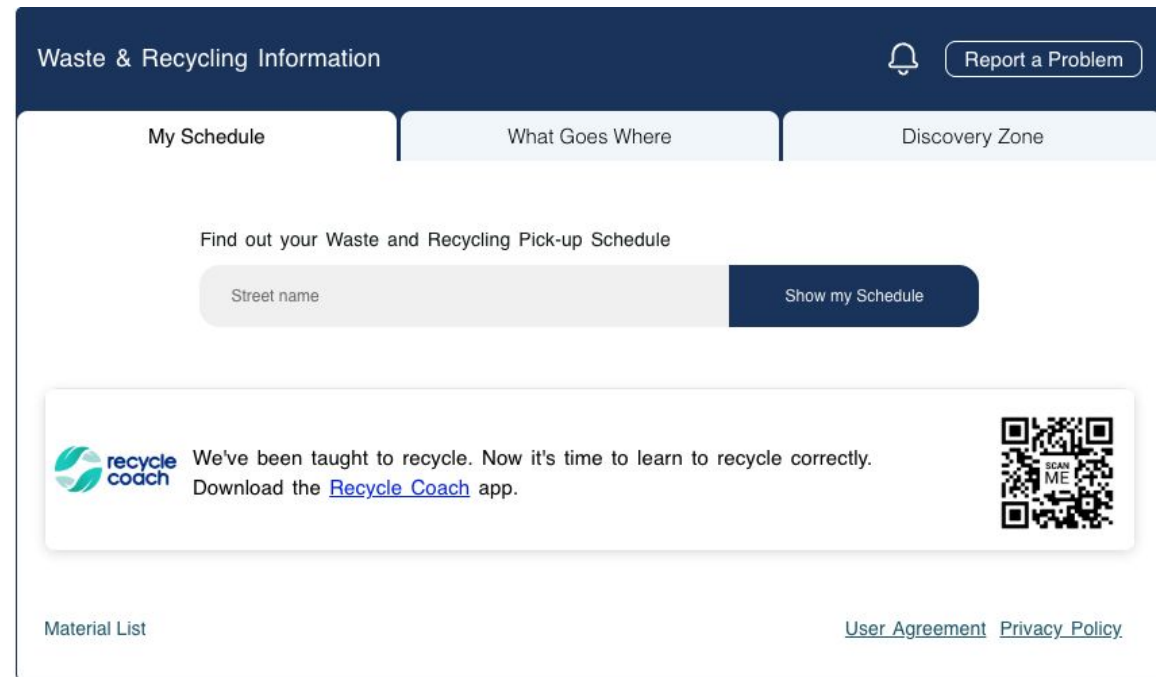
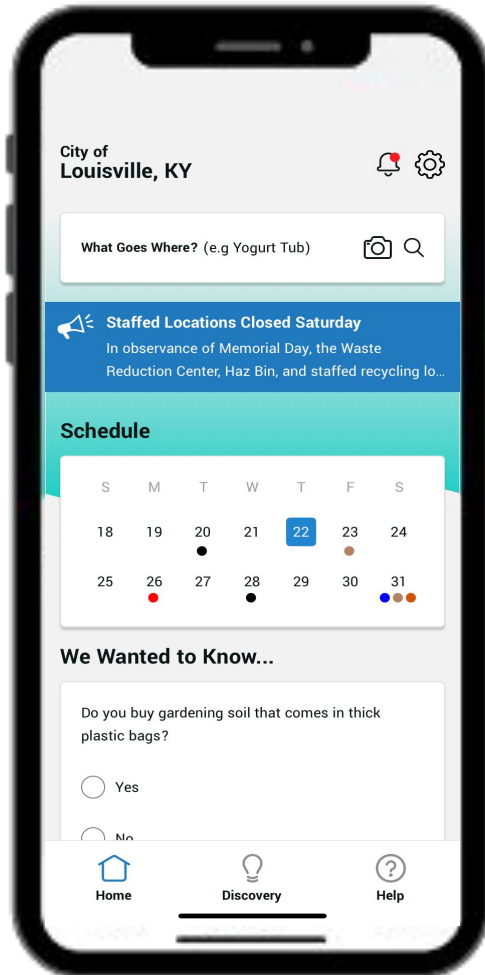


- Solid Waste Professional for 13 years
- Current role: Head of Sales for Recycle Coach
- Previous roles held at ReCollect Systems/Routeware, and Loraas Recycle
- Waste360 40 under 40 recipient in 2018
- Vast majority of my career has been spent trying to help municipalities solve recycling education problems



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What is recycle coach ?



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Why tech belongs in your engagement strategy



- ~90% of U.S. adults use the internet, mostly on mobile devices
- Residents expect digital convenience
- Tech enables consistent, scalable communication
- Recycling is complicated: we need to remove barriers to information as much as possible



BARRIERS!

Home > Departments > Public Works > Refuse & Recycling > Recycling

Recycling

Learn more about what Can and Can't Be Recycled in Your Blue Cart

Recycling is Easy When You "Focus on the Four"

Limit what you put in your blue cart to only four groups of items:

- ▶ Aluminum & Steel Cans
- ▶ Paper & Cardboard
- ▶ Plastic bottles and jugs
- ▶ Glass jars and bottles

Contamination

It's good that many residents are recycling, but the City has also seen an increase in items being put into the blue recycling carts that CANNOT be recycled through the City. This leads to a high "contamination rate" at the City's recycling processing center and that costs the City and resident's money.

The contamination rate is now at 31.22 percent, and it needs to be at 15 percent or less. By lowering the contamination rate, the City will be able to save money on recycling processing fees and trash tipping fees, which in turn keeps trash rates down for residents.

Each resident has the opportunity to recycle with a 96-gallon blue recycling cart which has been provided to residents. Recycling is NOT mandatory, but is included in all service plan rates.

More than 80 percent of your household waste is recyclable! The more you recycle the less trash you throw out. The less trash you throw out, the smaller the trash cart you need. The smaller the trash cart, the less you pay for monthly collection service.

When you recycling in your blue cart:

- ▶ Only recycling placed in City of Tulsa issued recycling carts will be collected
- ▶ Place all recyclables loose in the cart. No need to separate!
- ▶ Do not bag recyclables.
- ▶ Cart(s) must be set out before 5 a.m. on your collection day. The hauler has until 8 p.m. to collect your recyclables.

What Can Be Recycled

Que se puede Reciclar

Some items that can be recycled are not accepted by the City's processing facility this time. Items not accepted by the City's curbside recycling program may be collected by other agencies and businesses in the local area. Visit the M.E.T. for a directory.

Please make sure all recyclables are empty and dry!

Thank you for recycling!

Blue Cart is For:

GLASS BOTTLES AND JARS

- ▶ Clear, Brown and Green Beverage Bottles (Including Beer, Juice, Liquor, Soda and Wine)
- ▶ Clear, Brown and Green Food Jars (Including Jelly, Ketchup, Pickle, etc.)

ALUMINUM AND STEEL CANS

- ▶ Steel Food Cans
- ▶ Aluminum Cans
- ▶ EMPTY Aerosol Spray Cans (Air Fresheners, Cleaning Products, and Spray Paint)

PAPER & CARDBOARD

- ▶ Advertising/Junk Mail, and Envelopes
- ▶ Cardboard Boxes
- ▶ Cardboard Egg Cartons
- ▶ Catalogs, Magazines and Phone Books
- ▶ Cereal and Dry Food Boxes (Without Liners)
- ▶ Colored or White Paper
- ▶ Frozen Food Boxes

Blue Cart is NOT For:

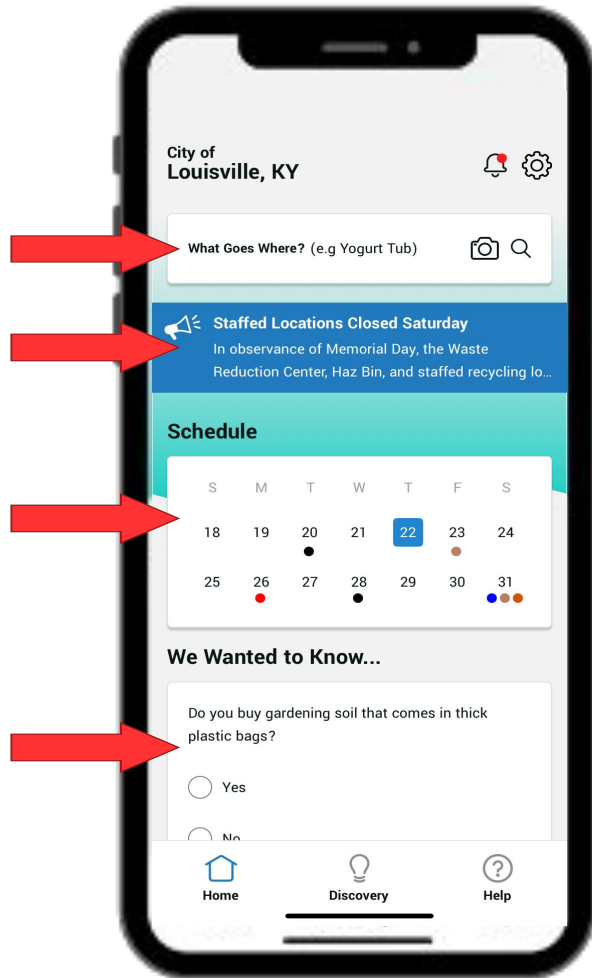
- ▶ Air filters
- ▶ Aluminum foil
- ▶ Aluminum trays
- ▶ Ammunition
- ▶ Appliances (anything with a cord or runs on a battery)
- ▶ Ashes
- ▶ Automotive fluids
- ▶ Automotive parts
- ▶ Backpacks
- ▶ Batteries (all types)
- ▶ Biological waste
- ▶ Buckets/totes
- ▶ Bubble wrap (all types)
- ▶ Carpet/carpet pads/flooring
- ▶ Car seats/booster seats
- ▶ CDs/cassettes/vinyl records/DVDs/VHS tapes
- ▶ Ceramicware
- ▶ Chemicals (herbicides, pesticides, fertilizer, gas)
- ▶ Cigarettes/cigar butts
- ▶ Flower pots (all types)
- ▶ Clothes, textiles and blankets
- ▶ Construction materials (commercial and residential)
- ▶ Dead animal carcasses
- ▶ Decorations

- ▶ Frozen Food Boxes
- ▶ Newspaper
- ▶ Paperback Books
- ▶ Wrapping Paper (Nonmetallic Only)
- ▶ EMPTY Pizza Boxes

PLASTIC BOTTLES AND JUGS

- ▶ Bathroom, Kitchen and Laundry Cleaning Bottles (Emptied)
- ▶ Clamshell Containers
- ▶ Clear Deli Trays
- ▶ Conditioner and Shampoo Bottles (Emptied)
- ▶ Dairy, Margarine and Yogurt Tubs (Emptied)
- ▶ Detergent and Fabric-softener Bottles (Emptied)
- ▶ Durable, Reusable Containers and Lids (Tupperware-type Materials)
- ▶ Food Containers and Squeezable Bottles (Emptied) (Including Mayonnaise, Mustard, Salad Dressing, Syrup, Vegetable Oils, etc.)
- ▶ Milk, Juice, Soda and Other Beverage Bottles and Their Caps (Emptied)
- ▶ Decorations
- ▶ Diapers
- ▶ Dryer lint
- ▶ Eating utensils (any type)
- ▶ Electronics (anything with a cord or runs on a battery)
- ▶ Explosives
- ▶ Fuel containers
- ▶ Filters (air, furnace, gas and oil)
- ▶ Firearms
- ▶ Fluids/liquids (any type)
- ▶ Food-soiled containers Food waste
- ▶ Furniture/home decor (all types)
- ▶ Gift bags
- ▶ Glass (miscellaneous)
- ▶ Grease/oils
- ▶ Green/yard waste
- ▶ Hair
- ▶ Hangers
- ▶ Hoses (all types)
- ▶ Juice boxes/pouches
- ▶ Kitchenware (pots, pans, cooking, baking, dishes and supplies)
- ▶ Light bulbs (filament, fluorescent and CFL)
- ▶ Loose shredded paper
- ▶ Mattresses/cushions/pillows
- ▶ Medical waste
- ▶ Medications
- ▶ Metal (except food cans)
- ▶ Mini blinds
- ▶ Paint (oil-based, latex and spray) Paint thinner/solvents
- ▶ Paper towels/napkins/wipes Pet waste
- ▶ Plastic bags/flexible film
- ▶ Pool chemicals
- ▶ Pools/pool covers
- ▶ PPE (masks and gloves)
- ▶ Radioactive materials
- ▶ Ribbons/bows/glittery items

From confusion to confidence



Disposal confusion? → What Goes Where with 15,000+ search terms

Low program awareness? → Push notifications for seasonal changes, events, collection tips

Inconsistent habits? → Reinforce behavior with education boost and just-in-time prompts

Lack of knowledge? → Continuous engagement with surveys, quizzes and gamification delivered in-app



Let your residents show you what they need



Unlock data-driven insights to inform your education strategy:

Track most-searched materials

Measure resident recycling knowledge

High adoption vs. low adoption areas

Prove ROI: show decision makers how outreach impacts behavior

Digital doesn't replace outreach, it amplifies it



Apps don't replace flyers, events, or volunteers. They extend your reach and reinforce the same key messages.

Modern outreach means meeting people where they are—on their phones, online, and in their daily routines.

Digital tools help build trust by providing timely, reliable, and transparent information.



THANK YOU!

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EAGLE COUNTY Waste Wizard



**Walking
Mountains**

EDUCATION | SCIENCE
SUSTAINABILITY

... How we use it and
how can you?

Presented by Amelia Kovacs
akovacs@apexwasteco.com

Formally Sustainability Programs Manager at Walking Mountains

*Now with Apex Waste Solutions as an Environmental
Sustainability Coordinator*





The Problem

- 63% of consumers are confused about whether an item is recyclable, even after reading the label. – The Recycling Partnership
- 42% of uncertain consumers admit to guessing whether something is recyclable, leading to contamination. – Reuters
- 45% of people say their biggest barrier to recycling correctly is not knowing what can or can't be recycled.
— WM 2024 Recycling Report
- Nearly 50% of Americans are confused about basic recycling practices.... even though 95% say they recycle.

— How Life Unfolds



The Problem... There's more?

What Bin Does this Go In?

- Residents are confused about what goes where → leading to wish cycling, landfilling recyclables, or just giving up.
- Recycling rules vary by location and frequently change, making it harder for people to keep up.
- Town staff and haulers are overwhelmed by repeat questions about the same 15–20 items.
- Outdated signage and inconsistent messaging make education even harder.

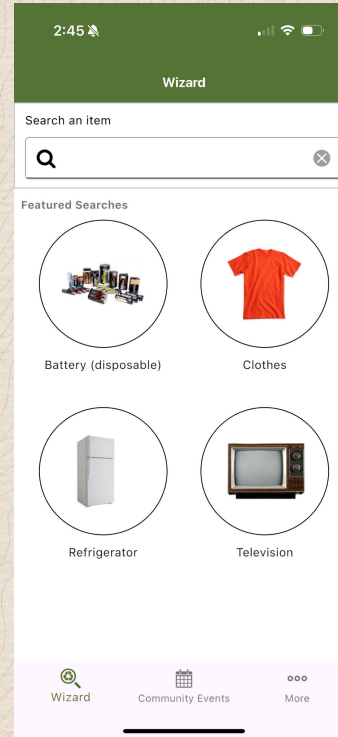


“The Problem”

The Solution!

Waste Wizard – Smart Search, Smarter Waste Decisions

- Waste Wizard = A searchable tool that tells users how to dispose of materials, tailored to local rules
- Embedded on your website + mobile-friendly
- Connects to backend software (Routeware) = Easy to update for staff





Get Quick, Simple Answers to Common Recycling Questions

FREE
AVAILABLE
IN ENGLISH &
SPANISH

Where's the closest recycling facility?
Where do I take hazardous items?
Can I actually recycle this?

EAGLE COUNTY
WASTE  WIZARD

walkingmountains.org/wizard

SCAN THE CODE
TO LEARN MORE



Wizard Materials

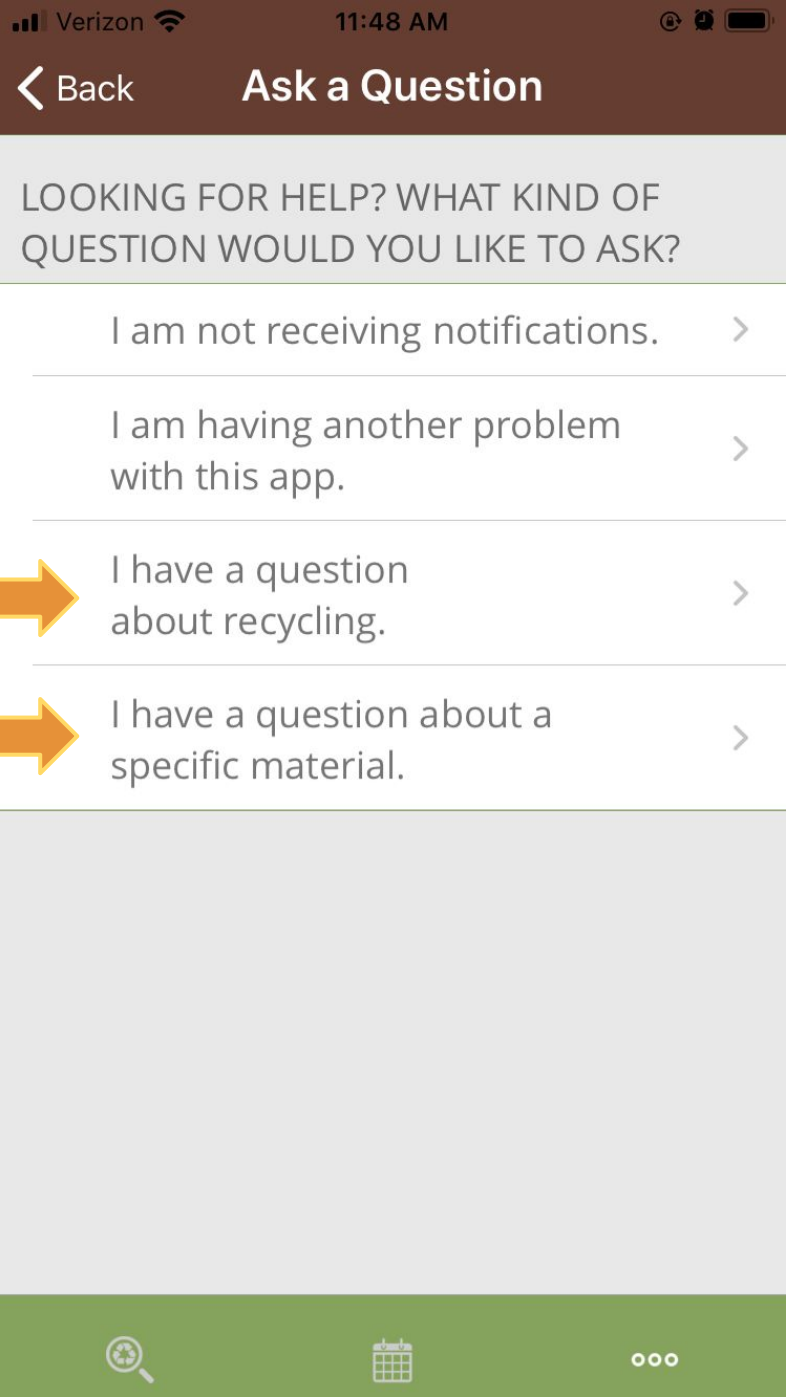
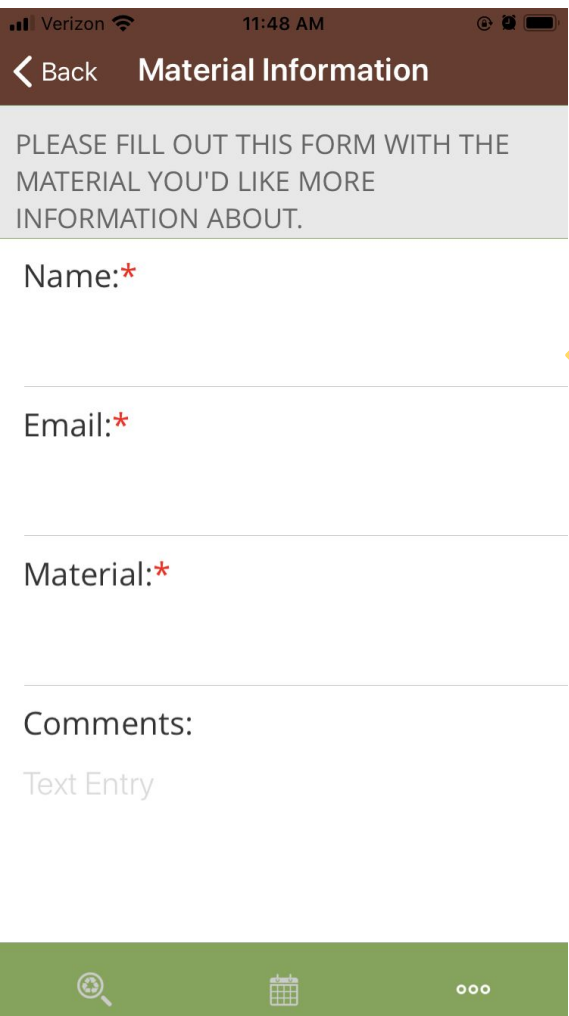
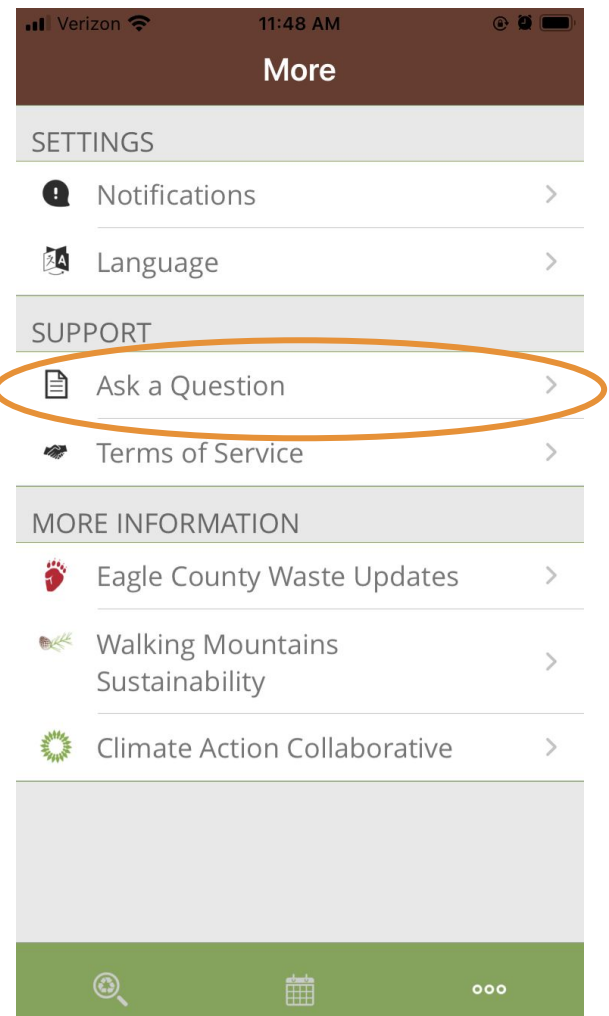
Materials

Wizard Materials

Materials

<div><div>Spanish</div><div>Tools</div></div>		Show 20 entries		<div>Material Search</div>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Page title	Image	Streams	Actions	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Aceite de cocina		Drop-off - Compost: Desperdicio de alimentos, productos orgánicos, Basura en la acera, Entrega: Vertedero	<div>⚙️</div>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Aceite para motores		Devolución - Residuos peligrosos del hogar, Entrega - Aceite de motor	<div>⚙️</div>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acero inoxidable		Entrega - Chatarra	<div>⚙️</div>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Afinador		Punto de entrega (centro de recogida de residuos domésticos peligrosos): reciclaje de residuos electrónicos	<div>⚙️</div>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Agujas		Devolución - Residuos peligrosos del hogar	<div>⚙️</div>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Aire acondicionado		Devolución - Electrodomésticos	<div>⚙️</div>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Alfombra		Entrega: Vertedero	<div>⚙️</div>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Alfombra acolchada		Entrega: Vertedero	<div>⚙️</div>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Almohadilla de algodón		Basura en la acera, Entrega: Vertedero	<div>⚙️</div>	

“Report a Problem” → “Ask a Question”



walking mountains[®]
sustainability

Thank you for attending a **ZERO WASTE EVENT**

Want to stay Zero Waste in your every day life? Download the **Eagle County Waste Wizard** app as your personal recycling expert!



Available for free on iOS and Android!

Get the app now:



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Gracias por asistir a un **EVENTO DE CERO RESIDUOS**

¿Quiere mantener el "cero residuos" en su vida diaria? ¡Descargue la aplicación **Eagle County Waste Wizard** como su experto en reciclaje personal!



Disponible gratis en Apple y Android!

Obtén la aplicación ahora:



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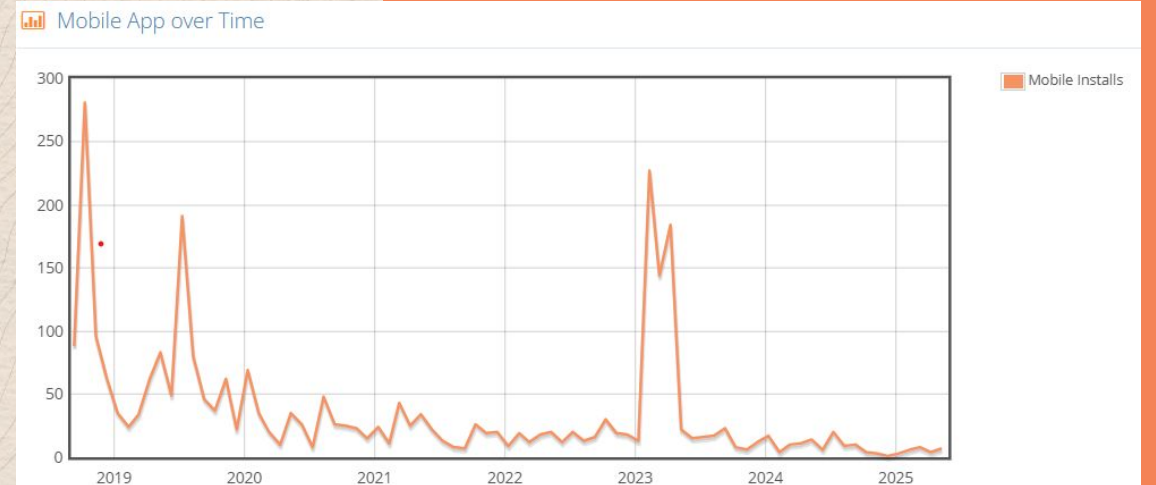
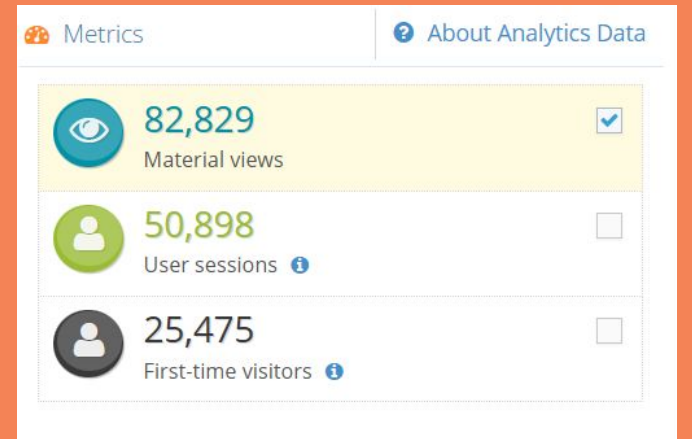
Obtén la aplicación ahora:



Our Impact So Far

Walking Mountains' Results

- 82,829 individual searches since launch
- Used by 8 of Eagle County municipalities and partner organizations
- Used to inform outreach campaigns & signage
 - All waste-related events are populated into the app
- 2,875 mobile app downloads
- 19,895 App User Sessions



Lessons Learned

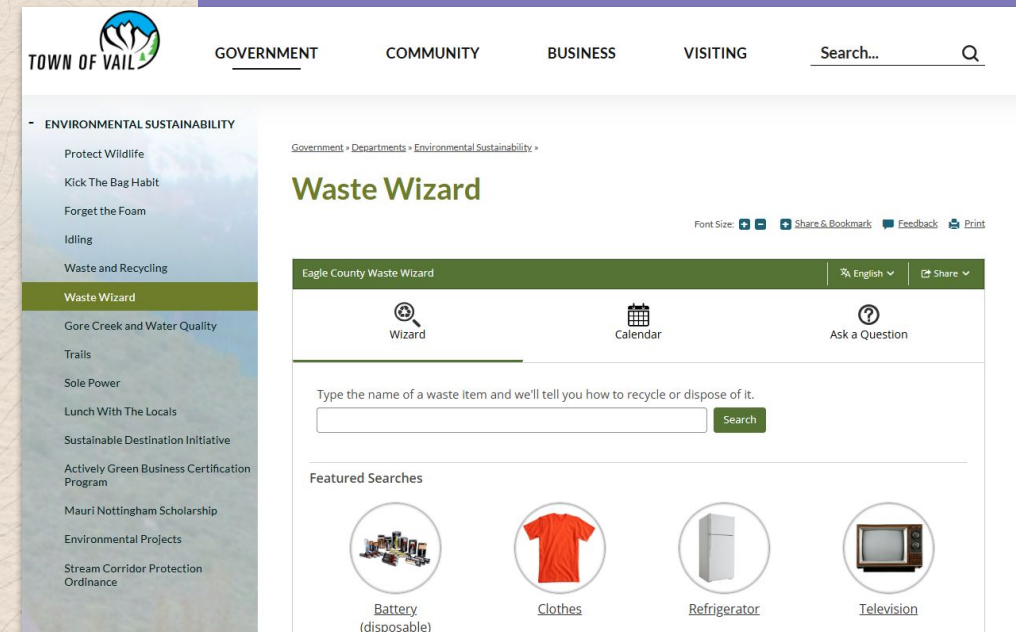
- Easier to navigate with statewide consistency
- **Cultural relevance** is key! Translations should go beyond direct language conversion to ensure accessibility and understanding.
- **Shared platform = shared responsibility.** Many communities use the same app platform (Waste Wizard), so it's critical that local data is aligned across municipalities. Residents may hop between town websites or apps. Consistency ensures trust and avoids confusion!



How YOU Can Use It

Make It Work for Your Community

- Translate into Spanish or other community languages
- Use search data to guide signage, events, messaging
- Partner with schools, municipalities, nonprofits, HOAs, and haulers for more reach and impact



Call to Action

Takeaways and Next Steps

- Boost engagement without burning out staff
- Use search data as strategy, not just info
- How can you build off local resources and not “reinvent the wheel”?
- Do we have capacity to run an app like this?

Let's talk! Find me after or feel free to contact me!

Amelia Kovacs, Environmental Sustainability Coordinator with Apex Waste Solutions
akovacs@apexwasteco.com, (970) 904-9790





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Thank you!

Presented by Amelia Kovacs
akovacs@apexwasteco.com

Formerly Sustainability Programs Manager at Walking Mountains

*Now with Apex Waste Solutions as an Environmental
Sustainability Coordinator*





HIGH COUNTRY
CONSERVATION CENTER

Frisco, Colorado's environmental nonprofit focused on practical solutions for waste reduction and resource conservation in Summit County.

Christy Turner
Community Programs Manager
High Country Conservation Center (HC3)
christy@highcountryconservation.org

970-668-5703
www.HighCountryConservation.org



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Dedicated Volunteers

Successes and Challenges

- Caring Community
- Large Volunteer Network
- Continual Interest
- Opportunity Ebbs and Flows



Event Volunteers

Party for the Planet

Annual Fundraiser

- Event Logistics
- Gift Card Grab
- Silent Auction

Zero Waste Warriors

Community Events

- Keystone Bluegrass & Beer
- Frisco BBQ Challenge



Summer Volunteers

- Compost Giveaway
- HHW – Hard to Recycle
- Oops Tags
- Grow to Share/CSA
- Stump the Recycling Experts



New Opportunities

- Local College Students
- Adopt a Recycling Center
- HOA Recycling Champion
- Zero Waste Ambassadors
- Strong Future Community Recycling Grants



Summit County Volunteer Foam Recycling Program



Group Leader: Doug Bair



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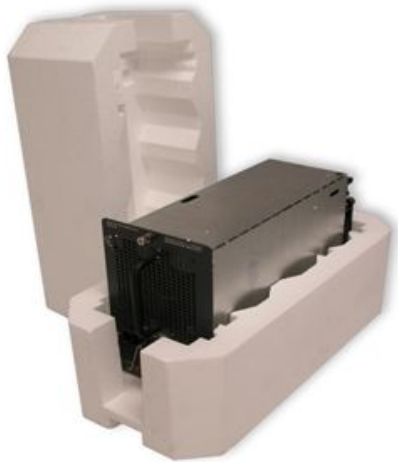


“Styrofoam” = EPS Foam Packaging

***Styrofoam* is actually...**

Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) Foam Packaging

- **98% air & 2% polystyrene plastic**
- **Coolers, medical, furniture, TV & electronic packaging**
- **100% Recyclable!**
 - **Keeps EPS out of Landfills – Never decomposes**
 - **Reduces oil needed to manufacture new products**
 - **EPS is in high demand & value**

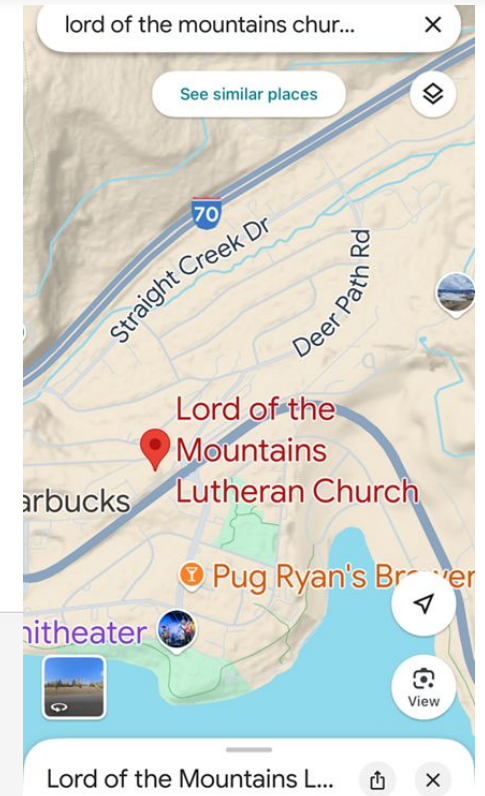


Summit County Foam Recycling Program

Container
Donated by HC3



Foam Recycling
Drop-Off
Location



Program Snapshot:

1. 3-year Grassroot effort with approximately 13 volunteers
2. Dropoff site accessible to all Summit County residents (pop 30k+)
3. 2 CY container fills up weekly

Estimated up to 1,600 CY of EPS Foam collected, diverted & recycled!

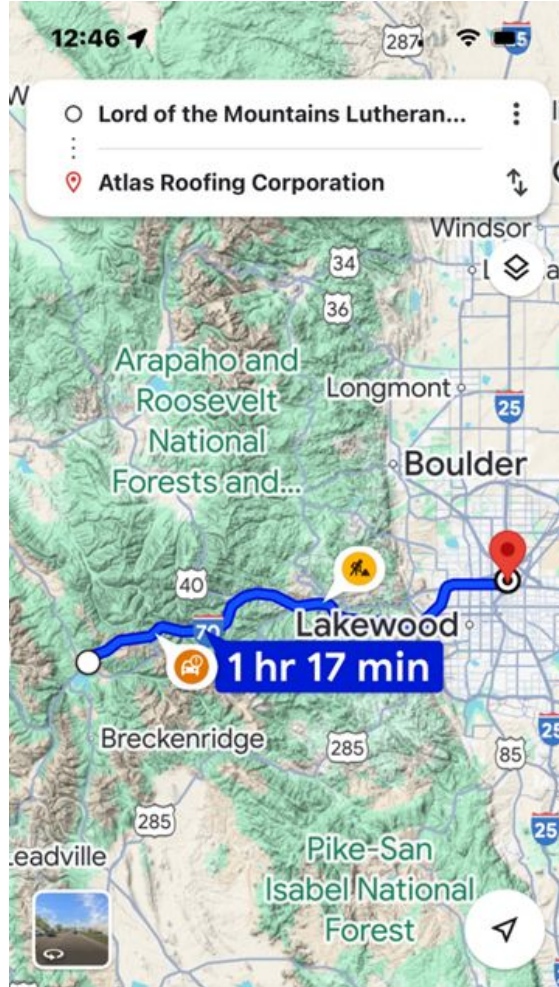


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Closing the Loop!



Round Trip -
2 Hrs 40 min



SHINGLES & UNDERLAYMENTS
MOLDED PRODUCTS
ROOF & WALL INSULATION
WEB TECHNOLOGIES

All Atlas Molded Products facilities are
EPS recycling centers!



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Volunteers Make the Difference

Come Join the Team!

“Recycling, in my opinion is only a stopgap measure to reduce waste and decrease the use of natural resources, until humanity can substitute renewables for the present non-renewables.”

Doug Bair
Cell/Text: 970-485-4579



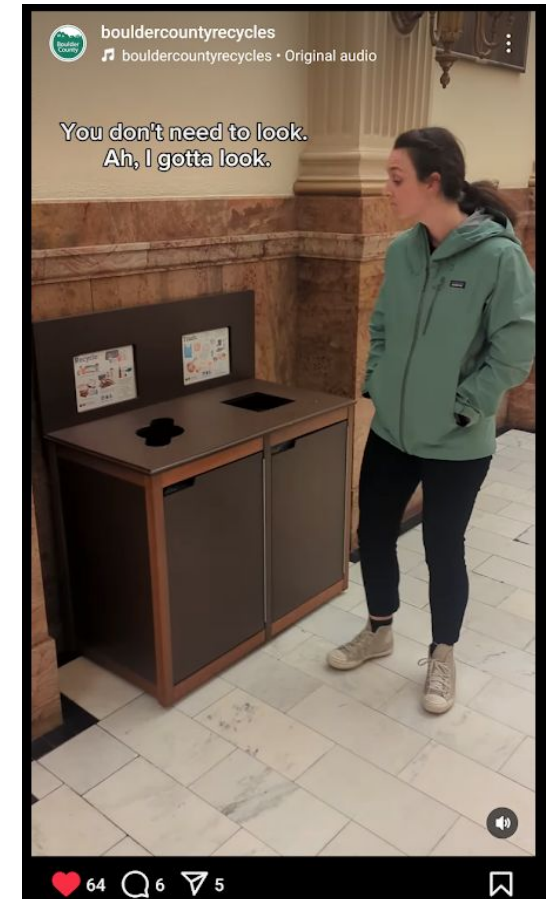
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Social Media

Relationship status: It's complicated

Chandra Valenza (she/her)
Community Outreach Manager
Boulder County Resource Conservation Division

cvalenza@bouldercounty.gov



How does social media boost our recycling engagement?

- It is/can be quick
- It can be interactive
- It can be creative
- It can reach a wide audience



Views ⓘ

338

Views

76.3%
Followers



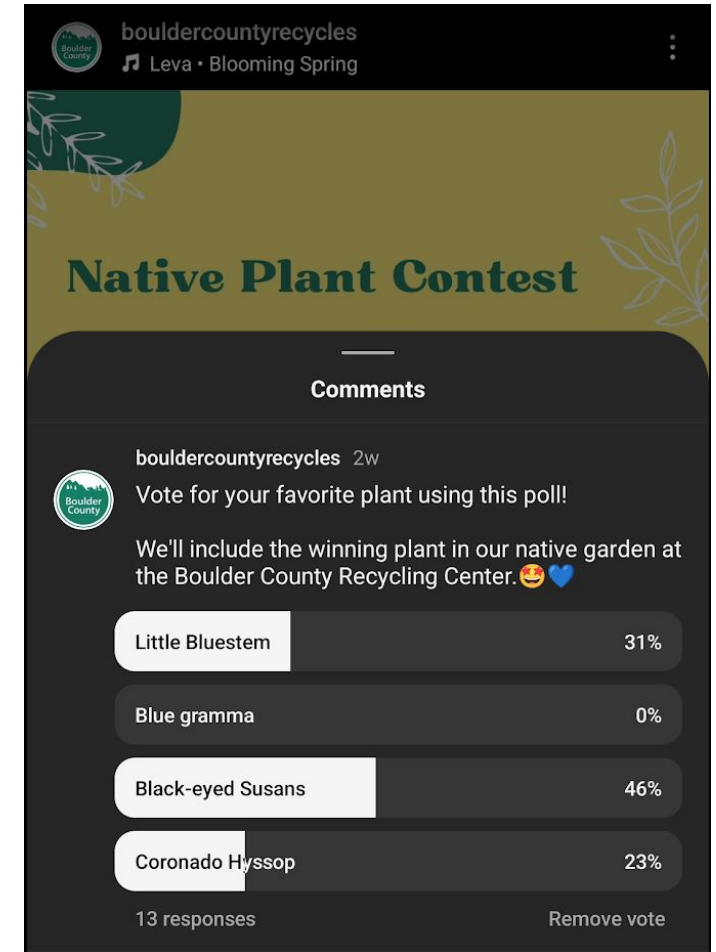
23.7%
Non-followers

Home

215

Other

123



What works for me

- Quality over quantity
- Content, content, content
- Collaborating or tagging other organizations/businesses



- Short videos

- Boosting posts

Accounts Reached

Jan	Feb	March	April	May
2,823		1416	2149	1112





Thank you!

Breakouts

Volunteer Mobilization

- Christy - christy@highcountryconservation.org
- Doug

Apps

- Ryan - rbuhay@recyclecoach.com
- Amelia - akovacs@apexwasteco.com

Social Media

- Chandra - cvalenza@bouldercounty.gov

Will give a notice when we have 15 minutes left in the session