



GREEN TEAM — David Bax (right), his wife Frankie and their 18-year-old son Ryker operate EcoBinary, which recycles electronics.

JAIME VALDEZ/Times Newspapers



CLEANUP — EcoBinary co-owner David Bax (above) wipes hard drives to Department of Defense standards. Here, stacks of laptops sit on pallets in the warehouse waiting to be recycled.

True recyclers

EcoBinary in Beaverton is two businesses in one: a resale store up front and a recycling warehouse in the back

By MIKEL KELLY

'Every client is different'

For Dave Bax, it all started with the question, "What do you do when you want to get rid of your computers?"

Both he and his wife Frankie already had logged years of experience in computers. She had parlayed her computer programming degree into a network administrator position; he had a background in the medical field that morphed into IT administration and eventually become an IT manager.

In their spare time, the California transplants who settled in Beaverton's Greenway area started building computers out of old parts in their home, as sort of a hobby.

"At one time," says Frankie with a smile, "We just rebuilt computers and gave them to our neighbors."

But that nagging question — about what we, as a society, do with all this old gear when we replace it with new stuff — finally pushed them into the idea of starting a business.

It's EcoBinary ("Electronic recycling, reutilization and resale"), and since January, it's been operating in a new location, 8240 S.W. Nimbus Ave., Building 3, Beaverton 97005 (503-352-4991).

It's a two-part business.

Out front is the resale store that customers see: shelves filled with all sorts of computer components and related electronic doo-dads.

"We carry a little bit of everything," says Dave. "Servers, network switchers, routers, general electronics, stereo equipment, printers, laptops."

In the back, though, is where the action is. Pallets of unwanted high-tech gear come into the warehouse through a garage door from an assortment of clients that the folks at EcoBinary won't divulge for security reasons.

"We're very protective of our businesses," says Dave, standing next to huge piles of computer parts. "The competition would love to know who our clients are."

The list includes medical clinics, high-tech firms and all sorts of companies and agencies, he says, adding that EcoBinary has clients from as far away as Corvallis and Eugene, well into Washington to the north and east of the mountains, too.

"Every client is different, and our agreement with each one is different."

EcoBinary gets referrals from Metro, the city of Beaverton and other big organizations, says Dave, explaining that "We'll get a call from a client wanting 10 computers, so we'll get them all built and ready for them."

In the warehouse, the recyclable gear is sorted into four groups: printers, plastics, all wire and circuit boards.

And what doesn't come into the store for resale is sent out the back, to a processing center where it's broken down even further for the raw materials.

"We break it down by metal, plastic, wire and circuit boards, so technically we're a collector and a recycler, says Dave.

It's a true family operation, says Dave, 45, explaining that their 18-year-old son Ryker, a student at Portland Community College, works in the store three days a week. And Frankie, 44, has a specialty that keeps her in the warehouse a lot.

"She does all our laptops," he says. "Tears them apart and puts them back together."

"I absolutely love working on laptops, taking them apart," says Frankie.

The Baxes have another son at the University of Oregon and a married daughter in Seattle.

'We' take care of it'

There is ample evidence that even though EcoBinary deals in high-tech gear and mechanical parts, the company has a heart.

"Our focus is corporate IT recycling," says Dave, but they also offer the general public the opportunity to drop off their old stuff for free.

"We also do a lot of work with nonprofits," he says.

And, although none of the items sold in the store comes with a guarantee or warranty, the Baxes run the business the same hand-shake sort of way any small-town business person would operate.

"If they have a problem, we'll take care of it," he vows.

"A lot of it is just treating people right, and getting referrals, so we get a lot of repeat business," he adds. "It's kind of a domino effect."

And that, he points out, is how they continue to get new clients.

"Coming out of IT, I know a lot of people in the field."

And, with a smile, he adds, "We've helped a lot of companies move out of this business park" — and that has added to EcoBinary's business.

No typical customer

Who's the typical customer coming in the store? No such thing, says Dave.

"It varies, from the general public to IT professionals," he says. "We get pretty much all walks of life coming in here."

"We get a lot of referrals from businesses, so that tells us their employees must have been in here shopping."

The store's inventory runs the gamut from Apple to Microsoft products, but there are things you won't find.

"We carry a little bit of software, but we don't really deal in the software side of things," says Dave.

"We also don't sell certain items. We don't sell hard drives, so there's no danger of somebody's data getting out there."

But service is a key element of EcoBinary.

"One of the things that we do is, we can do onsite mobile hard drive destruction," says Dave, adding that they also operate their own little network in the warehouse for "drive wipes," done to DOD standards.

"We just got picked up on the Oregon E-Cycles program," boasts Dave. "For that, you need to be in good standing."

For more on the company, visit ecobinary.com.