

Reuse Minnesota presents

REUSE STORIES

This portfolio features several reuse organizations in Minnesota, sharing their stories and experiences to highlight the impact of reuse across the state.



Economic



Creates **45,000** jobs and estimated to be worth over **\$5 billion**.

Social

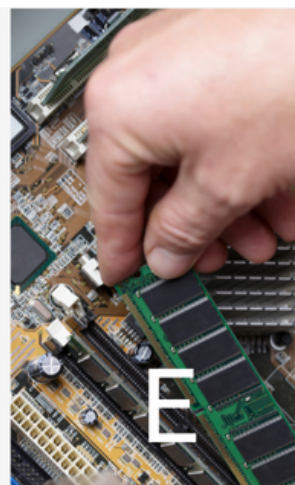


Creates local jobs with a social value estimated at **\$2.4 billion**.

Environmental

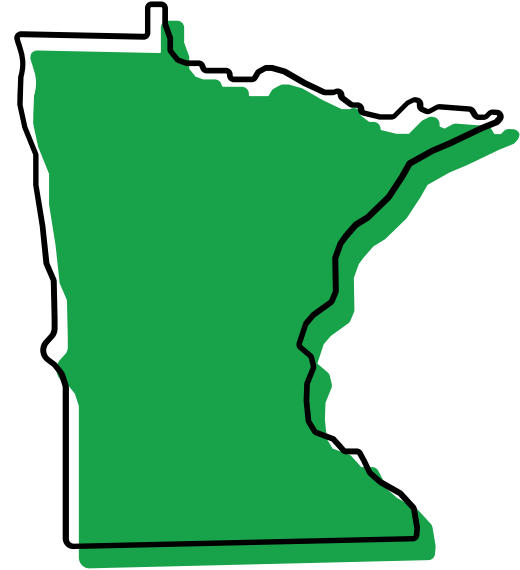


Avoidance of approximately **500,000 tons** of carbon dioxide emissions, per year.



OVERVIEW

The primary focus of this portfolio is to present the stories of reuse-oriented organizations in Minnesota, highlight their success, challenges, and opportunities for growth. In 2023, Reuse Minnesota connected with several member organizations through on-site interviews. By engaging in these discussions, Reuse Minnesota looked to better understand the needs of these types of organizations in order to offer more support and advocate further on their behalf.



HIGHLIGHTS



Affordability and **accessibility** are priorities.



There is interest in more **partnerships** and **collaboration**.



Equity and **inclusion** are essential to reuse activities.



Waste diversion is a strong focus, along with responsibly managing unusable materials.



Public **awareness** is one of the main opportunities, as current outreach is primarily word-of-mouth.



Being a **community asset** and connecting with local communities is important.

REUSE IN MINNESOTA

There is growing momentum around reuse in the state of Minnesota and organizations are committed to pursuing opportunities that further expand the reuse economy. During 2023, the Minnesota Legislature recognized this by approving \$18,900,000 to be distributed as waste prevention and reduction grants over two years, with approximately \$2,400,000 for reuse. This investment helps position Minnesota to lead the nation with reuse infrastructure, innovation, and education.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Most greenhouse gas emissions come from the production and use of new products. Reuse of material goods intervenes in the wasteful, yet common, model of production, use, and disposal, effectively reducing emissions associated with production. Additionally, manufacturing is costly for resource use and extraction, particularly when it comes to freshwater. For most of Minnesota, waste is sent to local landfills, many of which are expected to reach capacity within the next decade. With recent pressures to close the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC), waste produced by the Twin Cities metro area will become increasingly more difficult to manage. Reuse is an incomparable tool in addressing solid waste challenges. For more detailed information, view [Reuse Minnesota's reuse impact reports](#).

SUPPORTING REUSE

There are several ways to support reuse throughout the state of Minnesota. When it comes to reuse, thinking in a more sustainable mindset is often the most difficult part. There are many organizations working to build a reuse economy, offering quality materials at affordable prices. Luckily, reuse businesses and organizations are typically based in communities and approach sustainability through economic and social means in addition to environmental. Donating unneeded materials is a great first step, but it is vital to shop reuse, repair damaged goods, and rent items for one-time or rare use.

Challenge yourself to see how you can support local reuse organizations and see how they can support you!



Organization

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*Fostering a reuse ecosystem,
making it easy and accessible*



DONATE GOOD STUFF

Donate Good Stuff serves as a one-stop online platform that identifies the best and nearest places to donate unneeded items.



IMPACT



Focuses on equitable reuse, helping donors direct good, usable items to communities that need them most.



Diverts materials from the Twin Cities waste stream by simplifying and streamlining the donation process.



Offers individuals detailed descriptions of organizations accepting donations, based on the selected item type (clothing, home goods, etc).



In partnership with



MISSION

- Provide an online, one-stop, free platform that has all the information people need to find the best home for their donations.
- Mobilize individuals to engage in reuse, sustainability, and equity by featuring organizations that support underserved communities.

EQUITY AND EDUCATION

For Donate Good Stuff (DGS), the social mission is just as important as the environmental one. That's why equity and education are embedded into the work and mission and why local, direct donation is key.

The DGS team believes in collaboration and sharing of resources and fostering a more diverse and knowledgeable local ecosystem of reuse. DGS hopes to leverage this position to expand its reach and increase partnerships with municipalities, other nonprofits, and most importantly, to help more people feel great about reuse and waste diversion!



ONE PERSON'S TRASH CAN BE ANOTHER PERSON'S TRASH

For some, donating means packing items into a box and dropping it off somewhere. But often items aren't able to be sold by secondhand retailers and end up recycled or tossed, rather than reused. DGS connects people to the right place to donate so items can have a second life.





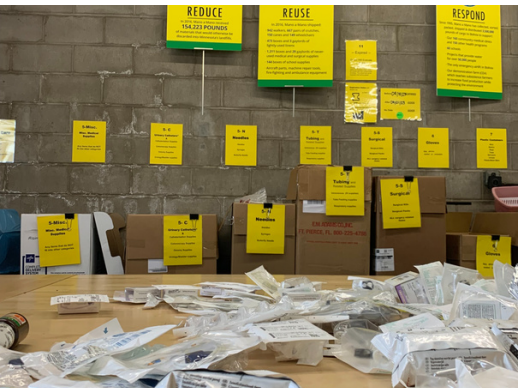
mano a mano
International

*People helping people and
reusing supplies for good*



MANO A MANO INTERNATIONAL

Mano a Mano works to save quality surplus medical equipment destined for Minnesota landfills and sends help to the communities that need it most.



IMPACT



Fosters a diverse network of partners, locally and internationally, all in the name of helping those in need.



Accepted 192,328 pounds of supplies in 2022, all of which would have been sent to local landfills.



Provides life-saving medical equipment and supplies to impoverished communities that need them most.



In partnership with



MISSION

- Connect Bolivian communities in need with life-saving medical equipment.
- Divert usable medical materials from Minnesota landfills in line with the organization's environmental values.



LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Partnerships, in addition to local and international support, are essential for the achievement of Mano a Mano's mission. Local connections allow for the staff and volunteers to save as much medical equipment as possible. Mano a Mano believes word of mouth is the most effective way to foster a network which facilitates the reuse of medical equipment.

Additionally, students from local universities work with Mano a Mano to better understand and gain experience in the intersection of social work and medical outreach.

NOT JUST STUFF

When it comes to medical equipment and materials, it isn't just stuff. Families, often mourning loved ones, are relieved to know that these items are going on to help others in need instead of a landfill. Medical equipment is needed around the world. Visit the [website](https://www.manoamano.org) to see how you can help.



DEVELOPING ORGANICALLY

Mano a Mano believes in developing their programming organically—meaning that new initiatives are a result of the needs of the communities they serve. For example, there was a need for physical therapy equipment in the Twin Cities. Mano a Mano responded by creating a program called the mobility closet, which provided 328 pieces of equipment to the community, benefitting 454 individuals.





Changing the way future generations play



MINNEAPOLIS TOY LIBRARY

Providing all families with quality goods while decreasing costs and waste generated by the purchase of new toys.



IMPACT



Promotes community and engagement for all families and teaches kids reuse through playtime and early development.



Reduces the waste generated from new toy packaging and divers old, but usable toys from the landfill.



Saves families money by replacing toy purchasing with affordable toy library memberships.

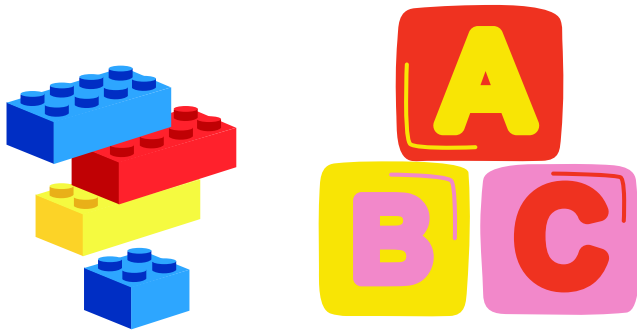


In partnership with



MISSION

- Be an accessible resource for families, providing quality toys and affordable membership prices.
- Teach kids the value of sharing, community, and sustainable thinking.
- Decrease waste associated with new toy purchasing, diverting unnecessary waste from the landfill.

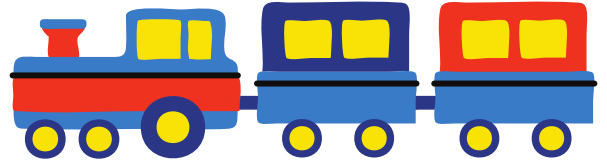


PLAYTIME FOR ALL

The Minneapolis Toy Library aims to be a resource for all families. Recently, the volunteers fundraised money to purchase toys specifically designed for children with special needs. This came as a result of conversations from families regarding the need for certain types of toys. Thanks to the support of the community, the toy library was able to broaden their toy selection, furthering their mission to bringing reuse and fun to all children and families.

JOIN IN ON THE FUN!

Become part of the Minneapolis Toy Library community! Memberships are based on a sliding scale and work at either location. If you are looking for a way to make a difference in the lives of children, please consider volunteering your time and passion at the Minneapolis Toy Library.



TOYS, COMMUNITY, AND REUSE

It just makes sense! Why spend so much money on new toys when you can borrow? The wide variety of toys allow you to keep up with your child's developing interests, while decreasing the amount of packaging waste.

It's all about the relationships for the Minneapolis Toy Library. Engaging with the community and building connections help expand the reach of the Toy Library, allowing them to help more families, foster cross-cultural relationships, and support reuse in Minnesota!





*Finding innovative ways
to help people*

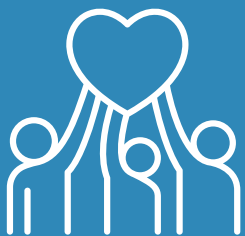


OLD SCHOOL BY STEEPLE PEOPLE

Offering quality clothing,
accessories, and home goods at
reasonable prices.



IMPACT



Fosters community at every step
of the way, from engaging
conversations to a sense of
support,



Reduces waste by offering an
accessible place to donate and
buy quality material goods.



Provides needed goods to
the community, ensuring
prices are accessible.



In partnership with



MISSION

- Foster and facilitate community reuse by offering quality goods at reasonable prices.
- Offer a welcoming environment to the community and build relationships to better promote reuse, volunteering, and sustainable shopping.



GARAGE TO GREATNESS

Old School began as a permanent garage sale run by individuals wanting to promote reuse. Since 1979, reuse has been built into the mission and continues to be a driving force behind the store. The team running Old School sees themselves as a "reuse facilitator," allowing individuals to do good without having to commit a lot of time. The desire to do good is at the core of the operation with staff often finding themselves being innovative to help people.

OLD SCHOOL, NEW INITIATIVES

Old School continues to expand their reach through efforts to find textile recycling and mending opportunities, grow their volunteering program, and create an online platform for specialty items to reach a wider audience. If you are looking for opportunities to join the reuse mission and help those in need, consider volunteering at Old School.



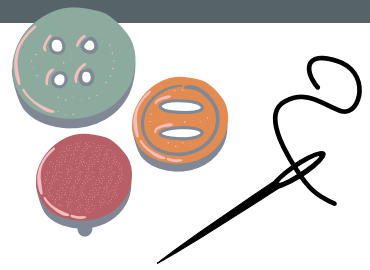
A COMMUNITY FOR REUSE

Old School is intentionally located in a historically underserved community. There was a clear need for home goods near downtown Minneapolis and the store is now an essential stop in the neighborhood, with regulars making it their first stop. Old School is a welcoming and familiar place where the community can effectively engage in reuse. The community gives back and shows their support by donating items to meet the specific needs of the store, such as donating gloves in the winter time or plastic and paper bags when the store runs low.





*Fix it again, don't throw it away -
Earth Day should be every day.*



REPAIR LAIR

Repairing clothing and outdoor gear so you can "spend more on beer."



IMPACT



Connects with individuals face-to-face and leverages its small business status to foster community relationships and inspire repair and reuse.



Diverts repairable goods from the waste stream, committing to "starving the landfills" and pushing local sustainability.



Provides expert assistance in clothing and gear repair and offers quality used goods for purchase.

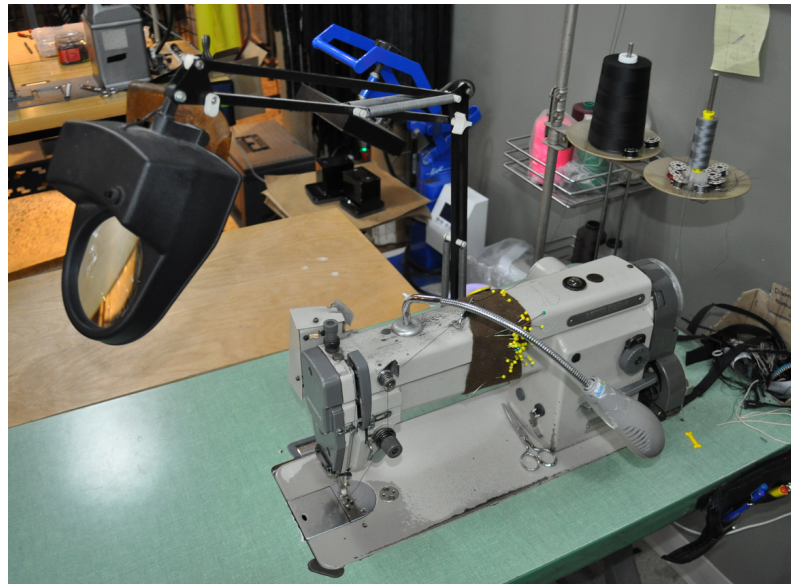
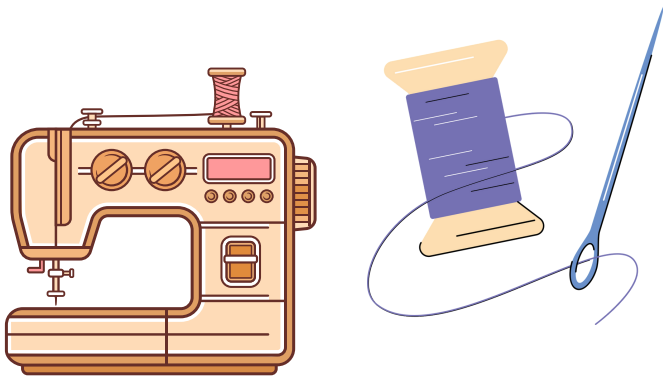


In partnership with



MISSION

- Extend the life of clothing and gear to make outdoor recreation more sustainable and affordable.
- Utilize experience to help individuals get the gear they need to enjoy the outdoors.
- Decrease materials from the waste stream through repair, consignment, and shopping reuse.



GET TO KNOW SMALL BUSINESSES

Your dollar has more of an impact when spent supporting local businesses instead of big box chains. Repair Lair invites you to explore the Twin Cities robust reuse and repair scene. Small businesses need consumer support. The interactions that local business offer cannot be beat and allow places like Repair Lair to foster change in the community.

Repair Lair always prioritizes people over profit. Get to know reuse business leaders in your area and make secondhand shopping your go-to way of finding quality and unique gear and clothing.



OPENING DOORS AND GETTING OUTSIDE

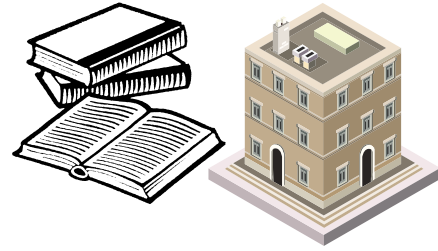
A focus of Repair Lair's work is to connect with individuals face-to-face to help inform what people buy. This allows the staff to build relationships with their customers and truly make a difference in how people experience the outdoors. Repair Lair fosters a sense of community and opens doors for people who wouldn't have had such opportunities to get outside.

REPAIR YOUR GEAR

Always repair instead of replace! Repair Lair is an asset for the Twin Cities reuse community and is eager to meet you and help you experience the outdoors. Stop in and take a look at what's for sale and get your gear repaired!



*Bringing preservation
where it isn't*

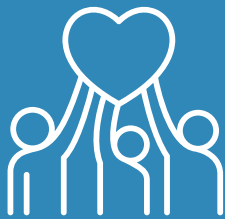


RETHOS

Reimagining historic places and leveraging resources to make preservation more practical and accessible.



IMPACT



Builds community resilience through revitalization of historic downtown districts and working to meet communities where they are.



Decreases generation of construction and demolition waste through preservation, adaptive reuse, and strategic maintenance of historic buildings.



Teaches building owners how to best care for their building, offering many classes focused on DIY skill building.



In partnership with



MISSION

- Leverage local, state, and federal resources to make the maintenance and reuse of buildings more practical and accessible for communities.
- Promote sustainability in the built environment and the preservation of historical buildings.
- Meet people where they are and providing them with meaningful ways to engage in preservation.



EXPANDING THE NARRATIVE

Rethos is working on expanding all of its programs to bring building reuse and preservation to more audiences. Some upcoming initiatives include an Emerging Developer Fund, increasing educational opportunities, and expanding the Historic Rehab Loan program.

Throughout all opportunities, Rethos is dedicated and eager to deepen connections and redefine preservation to make it more equitable and diverse. Equipped with four decades of historic preservation experience, Rethos is well prepared to bring this work to places that need it.

GET INVOLVED

Rethos is always looking for volunteers to help with new initiatives and events. Visit the [website](#) to learn how you can engage with historic preservation.

In the meantime, check out the [class calendar](#) and subscribe to the newsletter to keep up to date.

PRESERVATION, TAILORED

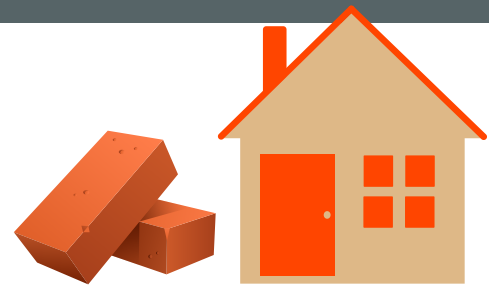
A focus of Rethos' work is promoting preservation in ways that suit varying needs of communities. Doors Open Minneapolis—Rethos' largest event to date—is held annually and an ideal way to introduce preservation to new audiences through cultural exploration and community appreciation.

Rethos has built a scalable model of preservation, offering low-level cost and accessible education while also engaging in high-level adaptive reuse through the Historic Rehab Loans program. This versatility in programming aims to make preservation and sustainability accessible, feasible, and economically viable for all communities.





Building better and building a legacy



TWIN CITIES HABITAT FOR HUMANITY RESTORE

Offering high quality and affordable building materials and home goods and investing the proceeds to connect promote affordable housing.



IMPACT



Focuses on "building together" to ensure more equitable access to homeownership in Minnesota.



Sells sustainability to promote affordable housing, where every \$1 in profit diverts 1.3 lbs of waste.



Pushes affordability, offering materials and goods for half original retail price.



In partnership with



MISSION

- Build the quality of life, health, and economic prosperity for the Twin Cities metro area.
- Produce, preserve, and advocate for affordable and more equitable homeownership, because homes and families are the foundation of successful communities.

ROOTED IN COMMUNITY

Building community is at the core of the Twin Cities Habitat Restore's mission. For the managers, staff, and volunteers, this means asking the crucial question of who and what communities benefit from available programming and resources. The process of digging deep, internally and externally, into issues of equity equips Habitat for Humanity and similar organizations to address barriers preventing communities of color from having higher rates of homeownership.

Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity Restore believes in responsible management of materials at every stage of the process. This includes collaborating with partners, such as other nonprofits, and supporting reuse and investments in local communities. For materials that are not accepted or incorporated for reuse, they are redistributed to proper second-hand retailers or recycling facilities.

HELP BUILD A BETTER TWIN CITIES

Visit the Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity ReStore website to learn how you can get involved through donating or volunteering. Learn how you can help build a better legacy of equitable and affordable housing in your community.



SAFE AND STABLE HOMES

Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity works to ensure everyone has the opportunity for safe and stable housing. This means understanding the racist housing policies utilized in the past and targeting resources to the underserved. This is achieved through every purchase, donation, and volunteer hour. [The strategic plan](#) highlights goals and priorities to advance racial equity in the Twin Cities to do more, do better, and build forward together.





Sustainably serving Minnesota's largest university community



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA REUSE PROGRAM

Collecting surplus materials from throughout the Twin Cities Campus and making them available to University departments or the public for purchase.



IMPACT



Serves the university by streamlining "waste" services and sorts materials at the warehouse for proper management.



Diverts reusable materials and properly manages waste generated from around 250 university buildings.



Generates value from unwanted items and offers them at affordable and often discounted prices for the community.



In partnership with



MISSION

- Achieve waste stream diversion through a university-operated program that collects material, sorts it, then promotes it for resale or recycling.
- Alleviate individual offices and buildings on the University of Minnesota campus from independent materials management cost and time demands.

RETHINKING WASTE

The University of Minnesota ReUse Program was started in 2005, resulting from the campus recycling staff receiving a donation of reusable materials. Today, the program now benefits from a spacious warehouse, allowing them to sell high and low value materials and giving even paper clips a second chance at life.

The reuse of the materials is the primary goal of the organization. These items are valued by the program staff and are discounted based on time spent in the warehouse. This means less in the landfill and accessible pricing.

LOOKING TO "HAVE FUN WITH REUSE?"

Check out openings at the University of Minnesota ReUse Program and consider volunteering. Opportunities are flexible, depending on the individual and inventory. Visit the [Reuse Program's Facebook page](#) to keep up to date with the warehouse.



SPECIALIZED SUSTAINABLE MATERIAL MANAGERS

A notable feature of the University of Minnesota ReUse Program is that it has the sole responsibility for managing unwanted materials on campus. Program staff have received gratitude for taking this pressure off of individuals within the university system. Localizing this work to a team of *specialized sustainable material managers* has proven to be very successful for the university-operated program. This structure has also allowed for the program to be not only viable, but a financial asset to the university.



Reuse customer stories

The following stories were shared by the organizations during the site visits. These particular interactions have had an impact on local retailers and display the meaningful and fulfilling opportunities that come with reuse.

Shopping secondhand at local thrift stores offers more than just affordable and accessible goods. It allows for a more engaging shopping experience that you don't often find at a retail chain. A regular shopper of Old School by Steeple People spoke Russian. He found connection with an employee who learned to speak a few Russian phrases. Similar to many stories and experiences, supporting local thrift stores allows individuals to effectively engage with local goods and local people, fostering a more meaningful sense of community.

Every year, the University of Minnesota Reuse Center hosts a Pack and Give Back program. Donations are accepted from the campus community and offered to students for free. **One year, a first generation student attended the event and shared that they were thrilled to receive clothing at no cost, enhancing their style and offering them comfort in their new college environment.** Connecting materials with people who will put them to use is at the core of reuse, oftentimes with varied and valuable benefits.

Reuse reaches and addresses crucial issues in Minnesota. Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity ReStore supports all homeowners in need, working strategically to better support communities that have been historically underserved and driven out of affordable homeownership. **One passionate regular brings previously incarcerated individuals to the Twin Cities Habitat ReStore, guiding them through the store and supporting them in the process of first-time homeownership.** It is vital for reuse to address concerns of equity, support those in need, and bring everyone into the conversation.

Minnesota winters are famously challenging, particularly for those in need of high-quality winter clothing. While cleaning a bus shelter on Lake Street amidst a Minnesota winter, one customer came across a small business called Repair Lair. He decided to see what this store had to offer and he found warm clothing that proved to be essential for his job working outside. Sometime later, he came back—this time accompanied by his family—to introduce them to camping, ensuring they had the necessary gear and equipment. **It's amazing what a little bit of curiosity can mean for you and reuse within your community.**