

## Turning the corner

by **Tina Eichner**

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Two weeks ago at the Rural Cellular Association meeting in Las Vegas, I had a discussion with Bob Sullivan, CEO of The Wireless Source, about his company's recycling efforts and wireless phone recycling in general and just how much work there still is to be done. The Wireless Source is a global distributor of new, used and remanufactured wireless phones mainly acquired through recycling programs.

I was encouraged last week to see a multitude of announcements in honor of Earth Day, with CTIA, many carriers, other wireless players and local communities promoting recycling through drop-off, return and charitable efforts. The industry truly has come a long way.

Still, according to a survey by the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corp., more than 70 percent of respondents (1,000 were surveyed) said they were unaware cell phones are recyclable, even though nearly 90 percent said they would recycle phones if it was convenient.

This is the key point. It has to be convenient.

The same survey said the average adult owns 2.4 cell phones, with more than 26 percent owning three or more cell phones. More than 56 percent said they still have their old cell phones and just 2.3 percent said they have recycled their old phones.

The potential global impact of non-recycled phones is staggering.

Bob showed me his company's postage-paid, self-mailing envelope, which debuted at the CTIA show last month. The idea is to include the envelope right in the box with the new phone. The envelopes also can be easily and widely dispersed at retail locations or events. Similar mailing products and services can be found through several other groups and Web sites.

Companies including ReCellular and Collective Good are behind recycling initiatives and business plans similar to The Wireless Source. Some programs even offer charitable donations for phones they receive. Many of these recycled phones are then sold in Third World countries where they are a more affordable choice for consumers.

You don't just appreciate your mom on Mother's Day; likewise we should appreciate the Earth everyday. In the case of wireless phones, to make a significant impact, turning in old phones needs to be a formal part of the process of acquiring the new. Put the envelope in the box—every box. Simple. Convenient.

It seems we have turned the corner. But there is still a lot of work to be done.