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## Center for Hard-to-Recycle Materials Now Accepting Mattresses

*Spring Back Colorado and Eco-Cycle partner to recycle mattresses and  
create jobs for former felons in recovery*

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(BOULDER COUNTY, COLORADO) — Starting today you can now recycle your old mattress, box spring or futon at the Eco-Cycle/City of Boulder's Center for Hard-to-Recycle Materials (CHaRM) at 6400 Arapahoe Rd. Eco-Cycle is partnering with recycler Spring Back Colorado in Denver, which disassembles old mattresses. The soft materials are sold to businesses that make carpet pads, and the box springs are resold as scrap metal. Spring Back Colorado also houses two small start-ups, one of which makes dog beds from latex foam mattresses.

Nationwide, 20 million to 40 million mattresses are discarded annually and nearly all of them end up in landfills. In Boulder County, as many as 30,000 mattresses are thrown away annually. Mattresses, box springs and futons are especially problematic in landfills because they don't compact and won't stay buried.

"We're thrilled to finally be able to accept mattresses at the CHaRM," said Dan Matsch, CHaRM Operations Director for Eco-Cycle. "Mattresses are a huge waste problem, and by recycling them instead of landfilling them we save natural resources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions," he said.

"By working with Spring Back Colorado, which employs former felons who have suffered from drug or alcohol addiction, we're also helping people who are trying to transform their lives for the better," said Matsch.

CHaRM takes dozens of hard-to-recycle items from electronics to block foam to yoga mats. New materials are added only after Eco-Cycle has arranged contracts with at least one, and often two, local buyers. For communities to be truly waste-free or "zero waste," they must have a plan to deal with lots of materials that are not accepted in curbside recycling bins. There is plenty of demand but very few facilities like Boulder's CHaRM, which collected and recycled more than 3.2 million pounds of electronics, appliances, scrap metal, and big durable plastics, among other materials last year.

### **How Mattress Recycling is Changing Lives**

Spring Back Colorado Mattress Recycling is really about lending a hand to people who have been shunned because of past mistakes.

That's how Christopher Conway, the founder and president of Spring Back Colorado, got involved in recycling. Conway, who launched the nonprofit in Colorado in 2012 after a career as a custom home builder, said he was inspired to change careers after volunteering for the Denver Rescue Mission. "I connected with those men immediately," he said. "That's when I knew I wanted my life to be about service to others."

A chance conversation with a friend who had heard an NPR story about Spring Back Recycling led Conway to visit the nonprofit's national headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee in March of 2012. When Conway returned to Denver, he secured a franchise license and invested \$100,000 in a large warehouse in north Denver where Spring Back Colorado continues to do business today. A grant from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Recycling Resources Economic Opportunity fund also helped get the recycling business going.

Conway also connected with the Stout Street Foundation and several other treatment centers that help recovering addicts rebuild their lives and find jobs in the community. The problem was that few employers were willing to hire them because of their troubled histories. Conway knew he could help by offering employment opportunities, and he was willing to take the risk.

By August of 2012, Conway had hired his first crew of 5 men and Spring Back Colorado officially opened its doors. The nonprofit mattress recycler now has 14 full-time employees, four of which work for spin-off businesses co-located in the same warehouse: Colorado Comfort, which refurbishes discarded mattresses, and [The Green Pup](#), which turns latex mattresses into dog beds. Learn more about Colorado Comfort by calling 303-358-8904.

"We are breaking down mattresses as we rebuild our lives," said Carlos Torres, Operations Manager and three-year employee at Spring Back Colorado. "We are grateful to Spring Back Colorado for taking a chance on men that some see as marginalized and offering us a hand up, not a hand out, so that we can reconnect with our families, our community and with each other."

In the first month, the nonprofit recycled 50 mattresses. But the demand for mattress recycling is significant, and Spring Back has been growing exponentially ever since. Today, Spring Back recycles 3,200 mattresses per month, and Conway is looking to open another facility in northern Colorado. He says his break-even point is 1,700 mattresses per month. The additional income is fueling expansion, and after northern Colorado, he has his eye on setting up Spring Backs in Arizona and Nevada.

For more information, visit: [www.ecocycle.org/charm](http://www.ecocycle.org/charm), [www.springbackco.org](http://www.springbackco.org) and [www.springbackrecycling.com](http://www.springbackrecycling.com)

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