

Tony Salcido – REV-E3

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Wastebaskets have become less full at locations where more people are recycling. But what is to be done with old computers? Discarded computers and other electronic devices are referred to as e-waste. Today we'll learn about an innovative rural Kansas company which is a leader in e-waste recycling. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Tony Salcido is co-founder, co-owner and CEO of REV-E3, an electronic waste recycling company. Tony is a veteran of 17 years in the information technology field.

Tony graduated from Syracuse High School where he met his future wife. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, he joined the Army. He decided to specialize in telecommunications after his grandma said to do something that he could use after he left the service.

After five years of active duty, Tony was stationed on the east coast. "I had opportunities there, but we wanted to raise our kids back in Kansas," Tony said. He chose to take an IT position with a manufacturing company in Beloit and also took college classes.

"I had to do a paper for my business ethics class, so I decided to write about e-waste," Tony said. During his career, he had seen first-hand the environmental consequences of electronic waste. He did several weeks of research on the topic and learned that there was no e-waste recycling in his area of Kansas.

Tony befriended a man named Lee McMillan at the manufacturing plant. Eventually they and another friend decided to launch their own e-waste recycling business. They called it REV-E3.

"The REV came from revolutionize," Tony said. "We need a totally different way of thinking about electronic waste." The "E" referred to electronic, and 3 was a reference to the three guys who started the business.

REV-E3 participated in the K-State Center for Entrepreneurship Launch a Business program and finished in the top four of the competition. "We learned a lot," Tony said.

They gathered discarded computers and stored them in Tony's garage. As the business grew, they relocated to a former high school in the nearby community of Jewell.

Today, REV-E3 specializes in recycling of electronic waste as well as performing other IT-related work. "We're a demanufacturing facility," Tony said. Used electronic devices – "anything that plugs in except a refrigerator, we don't take those because they have Freon in them" – are gathered from businesses, schools, local governments, and individuals. The devices are assessed to see if they can still be used and are disassembled as necessary.

"The average life of a computer is three to three-and-a-half years before it's considered end-of-life by the consumer," Tony said. "We've found we can extend the life of that product."

After REV-E3 collects used or discarded computers, the staff sanitizes or destroys the hard drives so that no personal data is shared. The computers are then reconditioned and resold on the secondary market through Ebay. This creates an opportunity for others.

REV-E3 also offers a give-back program for businesses, schools, hospitals, and municipalities. If REV-E3 collects an electronic device which resells, a portion of the proceeds will be returned to the entity which originally provided the device. REV-E3 works with some county-wide e-waste coalitions which serve as collection points for these pieces of equipment. Tony wishes there were more such local coalitions.

Other IT services from the company include new computer and laptop sales as well as troubleshooting, such as retrieving data from a hard drive after a computer has crashed. Recycling computers remains a big part of the business.

“We are able to repurpose 70 to 73 percent of the computers we take in,” Tony said. The remainder are sold to a big shredder near St. Louis. Repurposed computers have been sold to the east and west coast and as far away as Brazil, Portugal and Germany. Wow.

That’s impressive for a business located in the rural community of Jewell, population 432 people. Now, that’s rural.

For more information, see www.REV-E3.com.

E-waste seems to be increasing with the accelerating pace of change in technology. We commend Tony Salcido and Lee McMillan for making a difference by responding to this market opportunity. It’s an opportunity which shouldn’t go to waste.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.