

Columbia County, Oregon Reuse Program diverts 81,000 pounds from landfill

Program returns usable items to local nonprofits instead of the landfill

ST. HELENS, Ore., September 1, 2026 —

Columbia County Solid Waste Division created a reuse program, the first of its kind in the county. In 2024, the County Solid Waste Coordinator realized an opportunity to amplify the community's waste diversion efforts. Through an extensive two-year research and planning process, the county partnered with Hudson Garbage Service to develop the Reuse Program.

The Reuse Advocate, hired by Hudson Garbage Service, identifies and recovers new or like-new items from the tip floor, tests them to ensure they are functional and sellable, and stores them in three 20-foot containers before distributing them to local nonprofits. The items range from construction supplies and tools, recreation and sporting gear, kids' toys, clothing, home décor, furniture, art and craft materials, and other reusable items. The Reuse Advocate tracks all the items, material weights, and which community partner received which items.

Since January 2026, the program has diverted 81,000 pounds of material to community partners including Habitat for Humanity, Top-Notch Thrift Store, the Scappoose Senior Center, the city of St. Helens Parks and Recreation, schools, libraries, and other local nonprofit organizations.

"I really love the Reuse Program and my role in it," said Lori Baker, Reuse Advocate. "I get to help divert usable items from the landfill and get them to terrific local nonprofits like the senior center's Top-Notch Thrift Store and the Habitat for Humanity ReStore, which helps support their missions and our community. I also get to interact with customers and provide recycling support."

Tatum Flowers, Columbia County Solid Waste Coordinator, said the results show how effective the program is. "A program like this is rare, and with continued support from Hudson Garbage and the Reuse Advocate, we've already seen a huge impact," Flowers said.

In addition to giving usable products a second life, the Reuse Program reduces greenhouse gas emissions, conserves resources, and supports local nonprofits that sustain senior meal programs and housing for community members. It saves the county money on landfill tipping fees and extends the life of the landfill, making this program a win-win for the county, community, and the environment.

About Columbia County's Solid Waste Division: Columbia County's Solid Waste Division works to protect human health and the environment by providing responsible waste management services and promoting waste reduction, recycling, and reuse throughout the county. The division oversees the Columbia County Transfer Station operations and supports community programs that help reduce landfill waste, conserve resources, and keep reusable materials in circulation within local communities.

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