

# Recycling for Charities

*Protecting the earth while helping charities.*

**Recycling for Charities Web Talk Radio Show Transcript**  
**Dave Chameides**  
**October 16, 2009**

*Dwight Zahringer:* Thanks for tuning in to another edition of the Recycling for Charities podcast radio show. Hi. I'm Dwight Zahringer, chairman and founder of RecyclingforCharities.com. We're a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that allows individuals, organizations, and charities the opportunity to recycle their old cell phones, PDAs, mobile Palm Pilots, digital cameras, iPods, and iPhones for a value that is then donated to themselves or the charity of their choice.

Not only is Recycling for Charities acting as a medium to raise funds for charities, but our organization also helps individuals protect the environment as well. Helping to preserve the environment for generations of the future is an important responsibility for which everyone should be held accountable.

Unfortunately, until recently, legitimate wireless recycling efforts and programs were far and few in between. That's why I recreated RecyclingforCharities.com. It allows every individual to go online, choose the charity of their choice, donate their item, and make sure that charity receives funds, while making sure their donated item is recycled properly to protect the earth.

We're committed to recycling all of these products, and we strive to recycle or refurbish as many of the units we receive. Each week on the Recycling for Charities podcast radio show, we'll be talking to different individuals who are leaders in keeping the earth green and friendly, and helping charities along the way. We'd love to hear from you, and hope you enjoy what you hear. Let's keep the earth green and friendly, and make sure you recycle all your old wireless products at RecyclingforCharities.com.

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*Dwight Zahringer:* Welcome to another edition of the Recycling for Charities podcast radio show. I am Dwight Zahringer, founder of Recycling for Charities, where we recycle wireless products to give back to charities while taking care of the environment. Every week, we like to talk with another individual or organization who also keeps the environment's best interests on the forefront of their everyday lives.

And we've got an exciting person who's been featured all over the place. Give me a second to actually kind of illustrate this to you.

Dave Chameides. He is an activist who promotes conservation and living a more sustainable lifestyle. This gentleman put together over a year ago a blog and documented how he went 365 days without throwing out any trash and contributing to landfills and the overall dirtying of the environment.

Quite a fascinating feat. He's here to talk with us today. He's been featured in *Time* magazine and ABC News, among numerous, numerous press – not only locally and nationally, but around the world.

He also has a seminar in sustainability that's called Chasing Sustainability, and contributes weekly to a column on **Care II**. All of this took place in his California home, basically the initiative tackled the idea of recycling and other environmental issues. So Dave, thank you for joining us today to talk a little bit more about everything that you did.

*Dave Chameides:* Well, thank you for having me. It's an honor. I love what you guys are doing.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Appreciate it. Thank you very much. So we understand your nickname is Sustainable Dave. Where did this derive from?

*Dave Chameides:* I want to give you some really great story, but the truth of the matter is it's not. I was looking for a website before this whole thing started, and I was coming up with all these like, the Trashinator, and I couldn't think.

And this friend of mine at work said, "You know what we call you at my house?" And I said, "What?" And she goes, "Sustainable Dave." And I went, "Wow, that actually kind of has a ring to it." And the funny thing is that was just the website I made, SustainableDave.com and .org or whatever. I bookmarked them.

And then like the second or third day of January, this local radio station here in Los Angeles, local morning DJ show, standard guys.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Sure.

*Dave Chameides:* Picked up on it, called me up, and you know, they put you on hold beforehand to make sure your phone's working or whatever. And I said, "By the way, just so you know, my last name is Chameides," because it's spelled a little weird. And she goes, "Oh, I don't care what your last name is." I was like, "Okay, well, I just thought if

they wanted to call me that." She goes, "No, no. You're Sustainable Dave." And then she clicked off.

And then within ten minutes, I was suddenly this entity that has kind of like grown into its own life.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Well, that's cool. That's very, very cool. Hey, briefly explain why you decided to save trash for an entire year, and I guess what were the entire goals that you believe in that by completing this you accomplished what you set out to do, so give us the background on that.

*Dave Chameides:* Yeah. Absolutely. I mean, I'll be perfectly honest. I didn't think it through completely at the beginning of this, and it was sort of just something – I was sitting with a friend, October of 2007. We were having a beer or whatever, hanging out and I went to throw something away, and we started talking about throwing something away, and where was away.

And it was this, it really was kind of like throwing it over your shoulder, because while you're putting it in your little kitchen bin, and you're taking it out to the black bin outside, it's disappearing, and you assume it's being taken care of, but you really have no idea. And more importantly, you have no idea how much you're making.

So then in sort of like jokingly – he was like, "Well, if away was the back yard, you'd change your things – you know, your ideas." And then I thought, "Well, what if it was down – like what if it was in my basement?" And I have a very small basement. You know, wouldn't I be forced to like really confront some things?

And so I thought I'll do it. By the way, I should point out, I saved all my trash. I also saved all my recycling, and a lot of people ask about that. And the reason is because recycling is definitely better than throwing something away –

*Dwight Zahringer:* Sure.

*Dave Chameides:* – but it takes energy. A lot of things are down-cycled. They're not recycled.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Sure.

*Dave Chameides:* So in a way, it's a little bit of a crutch, because I think it's definitely better to buy something that's recyclable than not, but it's also

better to not buy something in the first place than to buy something's recyclable. Not needed, or buy something that you can reuse or something.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Helps to save money, too.

*Dave Chameides:* Absolutely. Yeah. I mean, there's so many good reasons for it. So I think that like this concept of, well, it's recyclable, so it's okay, I think it needs to be tweaked a little bit, because it's sort of – it's recyclable, it's better than what it could be, but maybe there's a better thing than that, you know, in the first place.

So really, at first, I started thinking like, this is going to be out of control. At the end of the year, I'm going to haul it out, and I'm going to look at how bad we are. And after about the first month, I realized that what was happening, as things went down there, I was making changes in my purchasing habits, because I was thinking, well, I don't have that much room, and my wife's going to get angry at me if it starts coming up the stairs. So I have to start making changes on this, that, and the other.

And then I realized I was really sort of like keeping it down. So I thought, well, let me change sort of the gist of this, and see how little I can create, but still live like a normal guy, where if you come over for dinner, other than having a weird conversation, you won't know that anything's really that different.

And so by the end of the year, I'd only made 28.5 pounds of trash, compared to the average American, which is 1,600.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Wow.

*Dave Chameides:* And you know –

*Dwight Zahringer:* Now Dave, let me just kind of lift off some different stats here from your website. Over the period of a year, and this is in 2008 –

*Dave Chameides:* Yep.

*Dwight Zahringer:* – you went ahead and collected 28.5 pounds of trash. I want to come back to that. Plastic bags, four pounds. E-waste, electronic waste, which us at Recycling for Charities care a lot about, 12 pounds of that. Paper recycling, 69.5 pounds. Cardboard recycling, 19 pounds. Miscellaneous, 26.5 pounds. Two fifty-seven bottles and containers. I like this part. Magazines, printed material, 28 pounds. And you took them to a hospital, so you

passed them back out. That's great reuse. That's the first form of recycling.

Eight cans of paint. Can't get rid of those cans of paint. And nine pizza boxes. Two comments on this.

*Dave Chameides:* Yep.

*Dwight Zahringer:* One, how is that you only consumed nine pizzas in a year? That seems awfully light.

*Dave Chameides:* You know what's really funny is towards the end, and I put the pizza boxes separately just because – physically because they're large, so I had them in a separate part. So I was like, all right, whatever. A lot of people have asked that. And we consumed a lot more than nine pizza boxes, but I have a really big worm composter.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Oh.

*Dave Chameides:* And the cardboard from the pizza boxes goes into the worm composter. It just takes time.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Sure.

*Dave Chameides:* So that – the nine pizza boxes was what I was left with at the end of the year. They have since actually gone to the worms, so they have been disposed of. But you sort of have to figure out where you cut the line, and you know, that was –

*Dwight Zahringer:* Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely.

*Dave Chameides:* And we ate a lot more pizza, though.

*Dwight Zahringer:* We're talking about almost 70 pounds of paper. Or let's do the math here. I mean, 70 and 20, so we're looking at 90 pounds overall of paper and cardboard. What did that mostly contain? What are those derived from?

*Dave Chameides:* Yeah. Most of that – well, the cardboard – I'm trying to think. The cardboard is mostly like cereal boxes and that kind of cardboard, that kind of stuff. I'm trying to think off the top of my head, I can't think of other – like a cracker box, like that kind of cardboard. It's mostly that.

And the paper, most of the paper was mail, which I got down significantly. Now the amazing thing is – now first of all, I forget the number you said, 69 pounds or whatever it was. That's not how much I got through the year, because I also feed the paper to the worms. So during the year, the worms would get whatever they could eat, and then the rest would go into there. So that's what I had at the end of the year. That has since almost all been gone through and fed to the worms. It's just, again, it takes time they have little teeth.

But I cut my mail down to the point where I get almost no mail, and yet I still had 69 pounds of mail. So that shows you that if the average person out there who doesn't cut down their junk mail is saving all of their stuff, imagine how much they've got. They've got 400, 500, 600 pounds of it by the end of the year. It's crazy.

*Dwight Zahringer:* That is unbelievable. Family and friends. What was their initial reaction, about basically turning your little, small, cubbyhole basement into a personal landfill?

*Dave Chameides:* Yeah. My wife is a saint, and she deserves a lot of praise for putting up with this. As I've told people, if I'm willing to do this, it's obviously not the first wacky idea I've come to her with, so she's sort of used to left field things coming at her. She was pretty cool with it. She basically said, "Look, if we get vermin or it starts to stink, it's over." And I said, "Look, I don't want to cause any health problems."

It was interesting, because as it would progress, I would go, "Oh, you know, I just found this new way to get around the fish wrapper at the store when we go to get fish. And I just found a way to get " You know, I thought of this idea to get rid of like coffee bags, and you know, things like that.

And she got very much into it as well, going, "Oh, I have an idea." She wouldn't be going down to the basement with me, but she'd be adding ideas as well.

My kids are five and seven. I don't know how completely they understood it, but they for a while were bringing things home from school, like wasn't even theirs, going, "Here, Daddy. This is for the basement." That's really wonderful that you want to be part of this, but I've got enough going down there as it is.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Yeah. That's great. It's almost like you're raising them as they always say, the age-old saying, it all starts at home. So you're raising your children this way.

*Dave Chameides:* And by the way, 100 percent of this is about my kids, because I want them, number 1, to learn by seeing an example. Like for instance, their idea of a piece of paper is that you use it till it's done on every side, and then you shred it up and feed it to the worms. So like their concept – we will go out to a store, and if I don't happen to have my bag with a little towel in it for drying your hands when you wash, they'll take a paper towel, and they'll say, "Here, Daddy. This is for the worms." And then I of course get stuck with a wet paper towel in my pants pocket.

But that's their reality. So it's pretty amazing how quickly they got it. And I also had very specific rules that I followed, like when I was out with my kids alone, any garbage that they created or recycling was mine, because essentially I'm making their choices for them. So you know, if they got a candy or whatever, the wrapper went downstairs.

My friends, it varied. Some were just like appalled. Some thought it was fascinating. And some actually sort of joined in on the effort and did little things on their own. But for the most part, I think everybody who talked to me and everybody who came to the basement, which was like a thoroughfare through there. It was wild, and still continues to be, oddly enough.

They expected to go down there, and it just to stink and be this rat infested whatever. And it wasn't. And so when they saw that, and they saw the worms, and they saw what I was trying to do, I think most people came around to like, "Okay, this isn't insane. This actually is kind of sane, in and of itself."

*Dwight Zahringer:* Yeah, you're touching on a point there. I want to refer to it as your little army of recyclers that you're feeding continuously. A lot of people may not be familiar with that entire process of composting and harvesting your own worm farm to take care of a lot of that for you. I guess touch a little bit on that. And that seems to be a big part of all this.

*Dave Chameides:* Oh, absolutely. The thing is, when I first thought of this, I was like, "What am I going to do with food scraps?" Because that's obviously a big part of things that go in the garbage, unfortunately. And you know, I had been thinking about starting composting. And I thought, "Well, okay. This is the time to do it."



I have a sort of tray tiered compost system, and I'd say it's two feet by two feet by depending on how many trays you have two or three feet high. So it was in my basement. I mean, how easy is that? I know someone who has one in his kitchen. He's built it so it looks a little nicer.

But it's actually an unbelievably easy thing to do. And it's like, why are you going to throw away all of this food that actually has nutrients, and you can turn it into castings to put back into the earth, or sell if you want? When there's such a good and another opportunity to deal with it.

I mean, there's a statistic that I read that 50 percent of all the edible food in the United States is thrown away every day. Now most of that is restaurants and past due on supermarket shelves.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Oh, I wouldn't doubt that at all.

*Dave Chameides:* Yeah. I mean, it's horrible. And if you don't agree with it go hang out in a restaurant and just look at what comes off of people's plates, that needs to change. I'm not saying that should continue. But at least if we're going to be doing that for the meantime, like why not put or have all worm composters in the back of every restaurant and put this stuff back into the soil, and have the soil be able to grow more. It's just the whole system that we live within just doesn't make a lot of sense. And part of what I tried to do was maybe sort of shed some light on that.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Dave, you got a lot of press pickup nationally, ABC News, *New York Times*, and so on. You mentioned you didn't expect it to take off like that. Why do you think there was so much interest in this? Is it because there's a real desire to change things? Or is it just sort of the novelty of it that would make an interesting story with a green spin, sort of a feel good, but do you think there's a real interest in people changing the way they live daily? Or is just sort of the novelty of it?

*Dave Chameides:* Well, I think the story was picked up because of the novelty. I mean, most of the headlines were, "Man Keeps Trash in Basement for a Year." I know a lot of people who tuned in were expecting what you would think to expect off that headline.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Yeah. Like you were a hoarder, and –

*Dave Chameides:* Exactly.

*Dwight Zahringer:* – all this old food, and just garbage and junk.

*Dave Chameides:* But interestingly enough, as things went on the general people who would show up at my house, and I'm talking from the local radio station to *Good Morning America*, it all went the same way. It's like, okay, you're kind of wacky, and then, wait a minute. Okay. We're talking a little bit – you're a little bit normal. Oh, this is interesting. You're not like creating some big public health hazard. Oh, my gosh. You actually have like some interesting information that I didn't realize, you know, that you can talk about.

So it sort of became like I think people showed up for the sort of car accident mentality, if you will, of it, and hopefully found that there was something more to it, and that I was actually doing this for some real reasons of simply that we especially in America live in this shell where we're not completely honest about what we're doing.

Our trash happens to go to **Punta** Hills landfill, which is the largest landfill in the United States. I think there's one in Denver that may be eclipsing it, but I'm not sure. They get 13,000 tons of trash every single day.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Wow.

*Dave Chameides:* I mean, that's just astonishing. And I've been there. They actually recognized me when I went there, and it was funny, because like a bunch of the people came out to meet me. I was like this trash celebrity.

And they took me on a tour of the place, and you just watch these trucks coming in and coming in and coming in. The place is going to close down in seven years, and all of our trash is going to go on trains 200 miles away to Arizona, where it's going to be put into another hole. And when that hole is filled, it's going to go somewhere else.

And you just look at this just on a very simplistic level, and you go, this just doesn't make sense. It makes no sense whatsoever. And the only reason why we don't have to deal with it is because we live in this huge country. But if we lived in places like Europe, where, Naples had a garbage strike, and was –

*Dwight Zahringer:* Yeah.

*Dave Chameides:* – two stories high in garbage for months, you've got to pay attention to this. So I think that we have a responsibility to be connected to what the consequences of our actions are, and not because of bad reasons, but we don't sort of make those connections too often. So my hope was just to make the connections, and hopefully a lot of people sort of picked something up from it.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Yeah. But Dave, I mean, think about it, though, too. I mean, if that landfill fills up and we have to move over into Arizona, think about that we could start creating mounds along the border to separate Mexico from the United States, and then they couldn't climb them, because they would be toxic.

*Dave Chameides:* There is a possibility there.

*Dwight Zahringer:* I'm just joking.

*Dave Chameides:* \_\_\_\_\_ that.

*Dwight Zahringer:* So you made an obviously a very dedicated effort in this. But what are some simple ideas or suggestions that people can do, you know, to get started?

*Dave Chameides:* Well, I mean, there's so many. I mean, my big one, which I think is so huge in this country, is to stop drinking out of plastic water bottles. I mean, if you live somewhere where you don't have access to clean water, obviously, you have to have water. But 99 percent of this country has clean water coming out of the taps.

And what I always tell people is like if you have soda or beer or juice or whatever you happen to like to drink coming out of this magical fountain in your wall in the kitchen and it cost you pennies a gallon, and then someone started selling it to you for \$2.00 a liter, would you really go out and buy it?

*Dwight Zahringer:* I want to interject, though, too, right now for our listeners that are in Michigan, the State of Michigan, our government is slated to shut down because of a huge budget deficit actually this evening, September 30th, 2009. And one of the ways they're imposing to manage the budget for the next fiscal year is to actually impose a tax on plastic water bottles of \$0.05 a container, which I do believe is a very smart idea.

But that just goes to show you to the extent of just like you're saying here, Dave, I mean, this can be eliminated. But now

government might see that you're actually making a statement that's eliminating a revenue source.

*Dave Chameides:* Yeah, I guess so. I hadn't thought about that. But it's interesting. It's like, okay, so now it'll be they'll tax cigarettes and plastic water, so the two of those will be in the same, the two of those will be in the same boat.

But that one just kind of amazes me. And not to mention the fact that studies have been done to show that, the water in a lot of these water bottles is not clean. No one regulates most of it, if it crosses state lines. It's just there's so many reasons not to.

I mean, another really simple one is, people who drink coffee, most people don't know this. If you buy coffee in the store, they give you \$0.10 back if you bring your own mug, or your own travel mug or whatever. If you buy one of those, it's going to pay for itself, and it's actually going to make you money. You won't be part of the 1.5 billion coffee cups that went into landfill from Starbucks alone last year.

There's two simple ones. Obviously million plastic bags enter landfills in this country every minute. So since we've started talking, what is that? You know, 15 million or something like that?

*Dwight Zahringer:* Yeah.

*Dave Chameides:* I mean, that's just astonishing. And that's petroleum. Those things break down, they get into the ground water. If you buy a bag now before most of these places-cities start imposing bans, most places will give you like \$0.05, \$0.10 back for bringing your own bag. So those will pay for themselves and they'll make you money.

So I've just given you two ways that over time you'll actually make money, and you'll decrease your imprint. There are also all these places, I happen to use one, it used to be called Green **Dimes**; now it's called **Tonic**. But there are a bunch of these places. You can stop your junk mail. I mean, who wants junk mail? You know? It uses a tremendous amount of energy to get to you. It uses trees. It uses water.

And it's a nuisance. I actually am a big proponent – you know how there's a do not call list?

*Dwight Zahringer:* Yeah.

*Dave Chameides:* Why is there not a do not send list? Why is it my job to tell a company, please don't send me the stuff I don't want? Why is it not their job to find out if I want it in the first place?

*Dwight Zahringer:* Yeah.

*Dave Chameides:* That just – doesn't that make sense? I mean, another really simple one, I have a backpack. I carry a lot of stuff around. And I carry a little toothbrush travel container, holder, and I have a little metal knife, fork, and spoon in there. And I just carry that around, so if I'm eating out somewhere, I never have to use plastic knives, forks, or spoons, because why do I want to use something for five minutes that's going to go in a landfill for 5,000 years?

And I also have a little foldable bowl that I carry with me. A lot of people go, you know, that's crazy. And I'm like, you know what? Empty out your bag right now. How much stuff do you have in there that you don't need? And this actually will make a difference.

And I don't kid people, especially when I give my talk. The things that I'm doing are not going to fix the world. There are still so many problems. But at least I can walk around and say, "You know what? I'm saving money. I'm not part of the problem. I'm doing the best that I can under these situations, and I'm going to hopefully do better, you know, in the future."

But I think it's about personal responsibility. I can't fix the world, but I can fix myself.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Sure. You know, it sounds like you definitely have created your legacy for your family and your friends, and those close to you, and definitely made your notch in life, of society. So I think you got your name in the record books there, or at least in the mental microfiche of a lot of people, including us. I guess overall, in a general summary, what did you learn out of doing this?

*Dave Chameides:* Oh, wow. To summarize it, one, marry a woman who's really understanding and will put up with things like this. You know, the bigger picture of it, and again, when I talk to school kids, this is what I always talk about, is just we have gotten so disconnected from everything, from garbage, from food, from energy, from water, from air pollution, because it's so far away from us.

You know, when you turn on your light, you know, that energy is coming, depending on where you live, from hundreds and thousands of miles away. You just don't know. And it's a little overwhelming to connect yourself to all these things, but I think that little by little, or just pick one, we need to understand what we're a part of, because if for instance, our energy comes from a number of different sources, but 49 percent of our electricity here in Southern California comes from two coal mines in Utah and Wyoming.

And realistically, I have to understand that every time I turn my light on, some guy has to go down into a coal mine and dig coal out for 12 hours a day. I'm responsible for him going down there. Now there's a lot of politics involved with that and other things, and he needs a different job, and etcetera, etcetera, but I'm the one who's putting that into motion.

So you know, I think we need to connect ourselves to what the consequences of our actions are, because the bottom line for me is I don't think most people want to do the wrong thing. I think most people want to do the right thing. But there's so much information, and there's so much confusion, and it's so vast that it's hard to know what the right thing is.

So everybody out there should look at their lives and pick one thing. If it's a plastic water bottle, if it's plastic bags, if it's plastic spoons, if it's turning the lights off, you know, whatever. And they can go to my website, and there area ton of different things on there. And just do one of them. Like just notch it up one level and commit to that, make it part of your life. After a month or two, it'll just become part of who you are and what you do.

And then notch it up the next level. We think of everything as an all or nothing proposition, and it's like, yeah, doing 100 things would be better than doing 10, but doing 10 is better than doing 1, and doing 1 is better than doing none. And if everybody in America right now started to do one more thing, started to waste a little bit less, we would be a little bit closer to cleaning things up.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Absolutely. Absolutely. You know, going through that entire process, I guess making the commitment, getting started, it doesn't sound like it was a shotgun start and stop. But I guess how easy did you teach yourself to change your lifestyle habits to minimize waste?

*Dave Chameides:* That was actually really fascinating, because the first week or two was really tough, mainly because it was me going through the garbage, because I'd throw something out instinctively, and then go, "Oh, man." I'm digging through to find out whatever it was.

But within a week or two, this just became part of me, I didn't even think about anymore. I mean, about a month into it, I was having coffee with a friend and they only had the little packets of sugar. And I was talking to him, and he looked at me, and he goes, "Do you realize that you just put the sugar packets in your pocket." And I said, "What?" And he goes, "The sugar packets. You put it in your coffee, and then you put it in your back pocket."

And I looked in my back pocket, and I said, "Actually, I didn't even realize it." And he goes, "You don't even realize you're doing this anymore, do you?" And I said, "No."

So it's interesting the thing is, if I can train myself in a matter of weeks to not do something that is, such a part of your life, throwing something in the garbage, imagine how easy it is to train yourself to do something like plastic bags or whatever. You can kind of get yourself to do anything, if you put your mind to it.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Sure. Let's go ahead and just talk a little bit about the e-waste, since, you know, we do go ahead and recycle, and we promote recycling old cell phones, PDAs, digital cameras. Now the iPods and the iPhones, we're getting those items and stuff here, too. But these have not only, just like you said with the petroleum in the plastic bags, these have plastic casings, petroleum involved in that. There's a number of hard metals and soft ones, and some pretty bad elements inside of a lot of these items. And that's our main focus, also, too.

The great news is that there's a lot of people out there that want to buy a lot of these parts, or broken down format, however. Talk a little bit about some of the e-waste that you collected, and what was it?

*Dave Chameides:* The e-waste that I collected was mostly not electronic stuff. I mean, I think there was actually one cell phone, but I don't even think that was included down there, because I gave it to a charity that takes them and refurbishes them for battered women or something. I forget what. I think a battered women's shelter.

Most of the stuff that I had were like light bulbs, and those blue cold packs.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Yeah.

*Dave Chameides:* And I can't remember what else off the top of my head. There was a couple of batteries in there that got recycled, taken to a hazardous waste facility to be recycled. You make an excellent point, though. There are people who have these phones and iPods and who knows what, and they don't know what to do with them. And obviously, they probably don't want to throw them away. And these things have a tremendous amount of value.

But a lot of times, they end up unfortunately in landfills, leaching into the ground water, or being sent to Malaysia or China, where they're taken down by people who aren't necessarily trained in what they're doing and can poison the groundwater and much worse.

*Dwight Zahringer:* One hundred percent. And that's one of the biggest points, is why we put together this as a charity itself, is not only is it a way to be sustainable, as yourself, and to kind of protect the environment, but there is a monetary value that these do contain. So that's why we put this together as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

One of the biggest components that we do receive that it's a hard time of the educational process, is if you think about it, on average now, statistically, Americans are going through a cell phone, or making a revision, on a yearly basis. Actually, it's closer to ten months. So every ten months, an American that utilizes a cell phone is changing their actual model.

While there are buy back programs and more recycling efforts that are happening from the manufacturers that are continuing and becoming more apparent, a lot of these people do keep these items at home. They store them because they do feel they have a value. I paid \$200.00 for that two years ago. I've got to be able to do something with it. And they just don't know how to do that.

Before long, and with the way with technology is changing, these items lose value and lose marketability so quickly. So that's what's interesting, is a lot of people do have a wireless electronic piece of e-waste in their possession or close to them, or at their home in a drawer somewhere.

But the biggest thing is cords. How many different car chargers, home chargers, do people go through. Those are coated in plastic.



They also contain nickel, steel, and the prize possession is copper now.

*Dave Chameides:* Yeah.

*Dwight Zahringer:* And you would not believe the amount of, you know, 55 gallon containers that we go through on a regular basis of these items that are smelted down and separated, and those yield a pretty good price, and they're put back into reuse.

*Dave Chameides:* Yep.

*Dwight Zahringer:* So it's amazing when you do start to analyze it and dig a little deeper, and I guess just pull back the front cover to explore some of this, of what really is obtainable by each individual just taking small little steps themselves.

Dave, you have a program you put together. It's a seminar, and it's called Chasing Sustainability. Tell us a little bit about that.

*Dave Chameides:* Essentially what it is, it's designed for school kids, but I actually also just yesterday, I spoke at a CPA office here in Los Angeles. So I speak to religious institutions, you name it. And it's kind of an overall well the general idea of it is, as I was saying before, there's so much going on. It's so big. It's so overwhelming, and so much of, you know, what I feel is important about working towards a better environment has been politicized and all sorts of other things.

And I think we need to go back to ground zero and just look at the big picture. So it sort of just talks about what the bigger picture out there is and how much energy we're using, and what we're going to need, and what the problems are associated with that, the problems for petroleum. Kind of the first half of it is sort of like this is the problem, and this is what's going on out there.

And as I say at the beginning, it's really meant, the first half of it, to thoroughly depress everybody in the room. And then the second half of it, I go, "But you know what? There's hope." And I kind of come back and give people some ideas, and show them how they can further go on.

But the big thing is, and this is why I love talking to kids, and I talk to kids all over the place, is someone told me it's like an environmental pep talk, because most of these kids are just like, "You know what? I can't do anything about this," or whatever.

And I point out to them, "Look, a 13-year-old kid invented television." You know? There's so many things that have been done by one person, that you've just got to put your mind to it, and you can do this.

And I've had kids coming up and asking me for my autograph, asking me how to start places in their schools. I had one girl come up to me, or she wrote me a letter, actually, the next day, telling me she – for 14 years, hadn't slept with the light off, and for the first time she slept with the light off, because she realized that her fears were not as important as what she was doing to the planet.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Wow.

*Dave Chameides:* Which really was powerful to me.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Yeah.

*Dave Chameides:* And I emailed her. I was like, "I hope this doesn't come out on a psychiatrist's couch." And I've been in touch with her since, and she's actually started a green team at her school. And it's really amazing.

The thing about kids is I think they feel helpless. And I try to point out to them, you know what? You have so much power you don't even understand it. And the power that you have is you can take these facts, and I'm going to give you a lot of them, and you can go to your parents and say, "Can you tell me why it makes sense to drive down the street to the store? Can you tell me why it makes sense to leave the lights on? Can you tell me why plastic water bottles make sense?" X, Y, and Z.

And I say, "Put the burden of proof on them, and do it respectfully. But the bottom line is, they won't be able to do that. And if you turn to them and say, 'Then we can't do this any more, because it's wrong, they're going to step up.'" And this is how recycling started My generation, we guilted our parents into recycling. And I tell them, "You go and guilt your parents into doing better."

And it's had a tremendous response, and hopefully, this is only the beginning. We have other things that we're sort of trying to do to get to a wider audience on that level. I'm now creating several other talks off it that are very specific. One is called What is Food? Another one is just about energy. Another one is just about vehicles, and X, Y, and Z, because sometimes I get calls from places that want a specific sort of area.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Sure. Sure. Well, that's great. We have a lot of organizations that participate with us, and we also have a lot of teammates and fans that are over on the West Coast, where you're at.

*Dave Chameides:* Right on.

*Dwight Zahringer:* If someone wants to get in touch with you and find out about getting together and getting to talk with you on Chasing Sustainability, how do they contact you?

*Dave Chameides:* They can at [Dave@SustainableDave.org](mailto:Dave@SustainableDave.org). They can also go to [SustainableDave.org](http://SustainableDave.org), which takes them to a different website, but it'll get there. I think like up top on the right or something like that, it says Contact me, and they can send me an email there. Any of those will work.

Like I said, the website, if you go on the website, on the left hand side, it says like 8.2 things you can do, and it's now like 12. But they're just very specific things. My thing is like don't wait for tomorrow. Pick something and start it today, and it actually becomes infectious, because you want to do more, you know.

*Dwight Zahringer:* That's great. That's great. Again, I want to thank you very much. Dave Chameides of Sustainable Dave. It's [365DaysofTrash.org](http://365DaysofTrash.org), and [SustainableDave.org](http://SustainableDave.org). Collected trash, and just became a great environmentalist and a great role model for all of us to follow by and raise our children by. David, thank you for taking the time out with us today. I hope everybody enjoyed this conversation. And we look to speak with you really soon and see more efforts from you.

*Dave Chameides:* Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

*[Music]*

*Dwight Zahringer:* I want to thank you for tuning in to another edition of the Recycling for Charities podcast radio show. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions, and are always looking for more content to put here on the actual podcast itself and on our website. Feel free to go on over there. You can sign up to become a charity or participating organization, or make a donation yourself as a regular consumer. They are tax deductible, since we are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.  
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Thank you for listening. Be green and love life.

*[End of Audio]*