

2015 CRAIN'S Best-managed NONPROFIT FINALIST

eCycle Opportunities, a subsidiary of JVS, was recognized for creating a source of sustainable revenue to reduce landfill waste and create jobs for people with disabilities.

By Sherri Welch
Crain's Detroit Business

To help supplement flat and declining public funding for its programs serving those with disabilities, Southfield-based **JVS** in June launched a new subsidiary, **eCycle Opportunities**.



JVS is no stranger to social entrepreneurship.

Twenty-four years ago, it established a janitorial services business employing some of its clients, and in 2004 it launched **HR Solutions Group** to provide human resource services to small nonprofits and businesses. The latter business produced almost \$307,000 in revenue last year to help bridge funding gaps, JVS said.

The agency also saw an opportunity in recycling electronics. In 2012, the U.S. generated 8.5 billion pounds of e-waste, and that amount is expected to increase by a third in the 10 years following, JVS said, citing data from Virginia-based **CyclePoint from SourceAmerica**.

With its latest subsidiary, JVS saw an opportunity to not only create another source of sustainable revenue and reduce the waste going to landfills but also to create jobs for an oft-ignored segment of the population: people with disabilities.

It launched eCycle in June with four employees, three of them clients with disabilities. The new subsidiary collects unused electronics through community collection events, at its home office and at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield Township.

The operation salvages and recycles steel, aluminum, gold, copper and plastic from defunct electronic products. It then ships the salvaged materials to CyclePoint, which sells the salable materials and disposes of the excess in an environmentally safe manner.

Since its June launch, eCycle has collected more than 65,000 pounds of unused electronics. It projects it will bring in 260,000 pounds its first year, producing about \$129,000 in revenue, depending on commodity prices, said President and CEO Leah Rosenbaum.

JVS, which is operating on a \$21.6 million budget this year, is working with local businesses and organizations to establish additional drop-off locations.

And it's in the process of seeking R2/RIOS certification for electronic recyclers, which ensures materials are handled safely and responsibly, including data on hard drives, and that all electronics collected are kept out of landfills.

"That is the big turning point for us, because the big companies can't use us without it," Rosenbaum said.