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## Material reuse pushed as dozens pick through leftovers

By Nathan J. Comp

Correspondent for The Capital Times — 5/16/2007 11:01 am

Elijah Rampa came to claim one of the two motorcycles being given away at the Free Salvaged Items Reuse Event held Tuesday at the former Badger Cab headquarters on South Ingersoll Street. Arriving ahead of the event's 4 p.m. start time, Rampa, like several others, was disappointed that the bikes had already been claimed.

Not wanting to leave empty-handed, Rampa surveyed the other offerings, but didn't uncover anything he considered useful. Then, in a burst of capitalist inspiration, he began ripping the electric wiring from the walls. After stripping the wires of their plastic casing, he'll sell the copper.

"It's an easy way to flip a quick buck," he says.

Rampa was one of some 30 people who dropped by the Badger Cab Co.'s former office, sifting through items deemed junk by the building's previous and present owners. Badger Cab relocated to Cottage Grove Road last year. The site is now owned by Stone House Development, which will replace the ramshackle cab depot with apartments designed to overlook the proposed "Central Park" running between East Main and Williamson streets.

The Madison Environmental Group -- a sustainability-conscious business consulting firm -- coordinated the event, hoping to pawn off the items Badger left behind in its ongoing bid to promote the reuse and recycling of materials. Stone House hired Madison Environmental Group to oversee the deconstruction of the Badger Cab buildings.

"We'd like to see as much of this stuff get reused instead of just sending it to the landfill," says Kevin Coleman, who helped organize the giveaway.

All of the buildings were without electricity. And without the benefit of windows, some treasure seekers turned to keychain lights and cell phones to navigate the unlit rooms. All attendees were required to sign liability waivers before rummaging through the piles of car parts, office wares and miscellaneous scraps strewn about the floors.

Most of the rooms and garages had been cleaned of their contents during Badger's relocation and then gutted further during a subsequent asbestos remediation project. But a large mess of odds and ends remained. Susan Meigs stopped by because she is "always looking for unusual free things." Unfortunately, like most who came, she left with nothing.

Yet others, like Matt Ormaza, seemed happy to load his pick-up truck with items for no reason other than that they were free. Having learned of the event from a posting on [craigslist.org](http://craigslist.org), and with nothing else to do on his day off of work, Ormaza made off with two Crown Victoria transmissions, a chair, a few lights and "an awesome poster of Madison."

"I'm not sure what I'll do with the transmissions," says Ormaza, who, like Rampa, had hoped to score one of the motorcycles. "If they work, maybe I'll sell them or something. The lights I'll use in my garage."

The event also brought out some unexpected visitors. A small contingent of experts attending the [Building Materials Reuse Association's](#) annual conference that, coincidentally, is being held this week in Madison, arrived by Badger Cab to witness materials reuse in action. The group learned of the event after it was mentioned in a keynote speech earlier in the day.

The Pennsylvania-based association, which, among other things, discourages landfill waste and promotes materials reuse, draws members from around the world. David Sadlowski, the manager of a building materials reuse store in New Briton, Conn., applauded the effort as part of a flourishing worldwide movement.

"If people are going to use this stuff, that's great," he says. "Green is in, and this is a big part of that. These materials do have value. Our mission is to keep them out of the landfill."

And that is precisely what Nancy Nelson, 57, accomplished by nabbing a table she'll use for displaying items at her daughter's upcoming garage sale, along with a slab of carpet she'll use as a mat in her garage and several unused headlights that she'll pass along to her brother, a Ford dealer.

"It's quite the haul," she says, stuffing her SUV with junk that moments earlier had been destined for the dump. "I've got a little something for everyone."

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Reuse popular with recyclers  
HARVEY BLACK  
For the State Journal

Like other Madisonians, Mark Shults and his wife, Nancy Vedder-Shults, are dutiful recyclers, making sure their household items such as cans, bottles and newspapers stay out of the trash and are taken away to be turned into other items.

But they are going well beyond that. They are working to recycle and are committing to have reused as much as they can from a Lake Mendota cottage they are demolishing to make way for a new one.

The 1,800-square-foot cottage at 5110 Spring Court, was too energy inefficient and too old to be moved, they said. So, with the aid of Madison Environmental Group (MEG), a local environmental consulting firm, the couple joined a growing movement to recycle and have reused as much of the material in the cottage as they can.

While Madison has an ordinance requiring that a demolition project have a reuse and recycling plan, Shults and his wife decided to get directly involved, instead of leaving things to a contractor "We felt it was the right thing to do," he said.

It's just one example of a recycling trend, according to experts.

The reuse and recycling concept is gathering interest in Madison and nationally, said Robert Falk, a researcher at the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory and coordinator and chairman of DECON '07, a national conference being held in Madison next Monday through Wednesday on reusing and recycling building materials.

"In the last five to seven years, it's becoming a much greater focus. There's always been some elements of recycling or trying to reuse some material, but it certainly is becoming more predominant," said Jeff Tubbs, director of business development at, J.H. Findorff and Son, one of Madison's major construction firms.

According to MEG, nearly 24,500 tons of building material from the Capitol West development project, which began in 2005 to redevelop the 300 block of West Washington Avenue, was recycled instead of being dumped in a landfill.

A key point in the effort to recycle construction materials, said David Waisman, vice president of MEG, was the building of the Overture Center, which began in 2001.

Findorff received a \$78,416 demonstration grant from the state Department of Natural Resources to assess the feasibility of the idea.