



## Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grantee Spotlights

### The BYTE Shop

In 2021, MassDEP awarded [The BYTE Shop](#) \$5,000 for their Reduce, Reuse, and Repair Program. The BYTE Shop is a community-focused electronics repair store in Jamaica Plain, Boston that fixes and resells computers, smart phones, game consoles, and other electronic devices. What cannot be repaired gets recycled. Awarded funds were used to purchase tools to repair and refurbish electronics, along with new storefront signage to draw in customers. These investments allowed the shop to grow their capacity to take on more electronics and spread the word about their services.



*Electronics ready for recycling.*

At the time of their final report, they had brought in approximately **four tons of material** in the span of seven months. **90-95% of these items (around 3.5 tons) were repaired and reused**, while the remaining 5-10% were recycled. The resell program also provided a substantial revenue stream for the shop and created an important recycling resource for the community.

The project encountered very few challenges, but the shop recognized the constant task of managing incoming electronic waste and the importance of

clearly stating what is and isn't accepted online and at their store.

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## Stonehill College

In 2021, MassDEP awarded \$5,000 to [Stonehill College](#) to help set up a tracking system for their Choose2Reuse (now Reuzzi) takeout containers. Micro-grant funds were used to purchase container tracking labels and for the maintenance of their Choose2Reuse tracking app.

These investments helped monitor container return rates, streamlined the return-use system, and incentivized students to keep containers in circulation. At the time of the final report, the college was seeing close to a **100% return rate**. This was a huge improvement as about 1/3 of containers were lost in 2017. Keeping containers in circulation meant **money saved for the college (almost \$86,000 annually)**. By the end of the project, the college had **reduced single-use disposables by 89%**, equating to a **20% decrease in trash tonnage**.

The project did encounter a few challenges. Two of the biggest hurdles were getting students to sign up for the app and treat reusable containers like other valuable borrowed materials. To overcome these challenges, the college recruited student, faculty and staff volunteers to teach students about the program, gave out prizes to those who downloaded the app, sent return reminders, and created an in-app point/badge system that awarded quick container return.



*Students and staff with Reuzzi takeout containers.*



*The Recirclable Team at Shubies.*

## Recirclable

In 2022, MassDEP awarded [Recirclable](#) \$5,000 to help improve its reusable takeout container services. Recirclable provides New England restaurants reusable containers and a usage tracking system, enabling them to offer their diners a sustainable alternative to single-use packaging. Awarded funds were used to develop a summary of key metrics for partner restaurants, including the waste reduction benefits they have achieved by joining the program. This information helps restaurants understand the impact of their reuse and serves as a marketing tool to get new businesses onboard. Thanks to the grant, Recirclable was able to provide reusability metrics above and beyond what was originally planned.



**Stand-out stat:** One early app adopter was able to sustain over 300 Recirclable borrows with less than 30 reusable bowls. Not only did they save over 300 containers from the trash but sustained that with a very lean inventory of bowls that still looked like new!

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## Untold Brewing

In 2021, MassDEP awarded \$3,000 to [Untold Brewing](#) for their Reusable Wrap Pilot Program. Untold Brewing is a family-owned brewery and taproom based in Scituate, MA. The company used grant funds to purchase and test reusable pallet wraps made from durable mesh material. Reusable wraps were tested in-house, at the company's distributor, and at three other breweries.

The wraps were a success; they helped curb single-use plastic wrap waste and saved breweries money. **Reuseable wraps saved 1.5 pounds of plastic per use, and every 13 uses saved \$20.** Untold Brewing shared these successes and encouraged switching to reusable wraps at the Massachusetts Brewers Guild Conference and on social media.

The project faced a few challenges, notably getting their distributor onboard and tracking the number of times wraps were used. The project team noted that these challenges could be overcome with education and an efficient tracking system that doesn't get in the way of fast-moving production.



*Reusable pallet wrap.*





*Fresh Start's new collection dock.*

## Fresh Start Furniture Bank

In 2019, MassDEP awarded [Fresh Start Furniture Bank](#) \$3,150 to refurbish and reopen a bulk furniture collection dock within its warehouse. Fresh Start Furniture Bank is a charity based in Hudson, MA that collects and redistributes donated furniture and home goods to communities at no cost.

The additional collection dock made unloading furniture from trucks more efficient, helped keep volunteers safe, and allowed the charity to accept more used furniture.

## HandUp Mattress Recycling

In 2022, MassDEP awarded \$5,000 to [HandUp Mattress Recycling](#) to spread awareness of their mattress reuse and recycling services across Southeastern, MA. The company used grant funds to create and distribute targeted advertisements in Spanish and English on social media and *Radio Latina*. They also used funds to mail postcards, create banners for their store, and print flyers to be posted around town. The combination of **marketing tactics generated around \$12,000 in reused mattress sales.**

Through the course of the project, HandUp discovered that a diversified marketing approach that includes physical ads reaches a variety of audiences. They also learned that radio ads were not the most effective medium to market their services.



*Pre-owned mattresses for sale at HandUp.*



## Lexington School Lunch Program

In 2020, MassDEP awarded [Lexington Public Schools](#) \$5,000 to eliminate the use of disposable cellophane bags used to wrap fruit in their lunch program. The schools used the grant funds to purchase whole fruit dispensers, a plastic-free alternative to single-use packaging that still allowed students to receive a single serving of fruit. Switching to the dispensers saved the schools money in the long run, curbed their waste, and decreased the amount of staff labor needed to wrap and restock fruit each day.

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*LittleStore's Shipping Container*

## Urban Missionaries of Our Lady of Hope

In 2022, MassDEP awarded the [Urban Missionaries of Our Lady of Hope](#) \$5,000 to expand their [LittleStore thrift shop](#). The thrift shop supports low-income families living in and around Worcester by selling used clothing, household goods, and furniture for a small cost. The shop used grant funds to purchase a 40-foot-long shipping container located in their parking lot. The container houses overflow from the main storefront, allowing the shop to collect more donated items for resale and reuse.

It has also **increased the number of weekly pickups** staff are able to make to gather larger donations, **from 2-3 to 5-6 times per week**. Furthermore, the store saw **register transactions increase by about 20%**, meaning more people were served by their shop.



*Volunteers moving furniture from the shipping container.*

## Wachusett Earthday Inc.

In 2020, MassDEP awarded [Wachusett Earthday Inc.](#) \$5000 to create a contactless donation drop-off system used throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Wachusett Earthday Inc. is a volunteer-run organization that collects items for reuse from residents. Grant funds were used to



rent storage containers that increased how much stuff could be collected. They also improved safety, allowing volunteers to continue accepting donations without encountering residents.

Funds were also used to purchase a floor scale that weighs donations. This has helped the non-profit track how much is reused, recycled, and trashed. Over 92 collection days, **they were able to accept over 12,600 boxes of goods weighing 97.5 tons.** They also **saved more than 400 pieces of furniture.** With increased storage, came new challenges. Volunteers had to spend a lot of time fitting furniture into containers and coordinating pickups/deliveries.

