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E-Scrap Super Saturday draws record 160K to 250K pounds of material

By Brian M. Boyce

The Tribune-Star

TERRE HAUTE — Workers won't be sure of exact poundage for a couple of days, but they knew on-scene that Santa's E-Scrap Super Saturday was one for the record books.

"I don't think anybody anticipated it would be this big of a response," Greg Ulm said 15 minutes before the program was theoretically to have ended.

Vehicles lined the streets around Ninth and Chestnut entering the Indiana State University parking lot where the electronics recycling collection program was to have been hosted from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. As of 8 p.m., work was still being done at the site.

Ulm said cars had been backed up to Wabash Avenue earlier that day.

Semitrailers were still being loaded and the parking lot was still packed with materials.

"Women's basketball would be nice, but I don't think I'm going to make it," Ulm, a 1968 ISU alumnus, joked in reference to Saturday's 2 p.m. game.

Previous e-scrap drives had reportedly netted between 33,000 and 37,000 pounds of material.

Ulm said his best guesstimate for this Saturday's was between 160,000 and 250,000 pounds.

A big range, he acknowledged, but even by late afternoon it was difficult to count all the material still being processed.

Ulm, with Trees Inc., said he'd arrived at the site around 8 a.m. to set up and people were already dropping off material.

"As soon as I got here I started working," he said, adding that the university's parking lot still had to be cleaned for students and staff before Monday morning.

Large trucks from Rockville and Clinton dropped off quantities of computers, and numerous Vigo County businesses brought old electronic equipment, he said.

"You can see a lot of computers and TVs," Ulm said, pointing out several parking spaces filled with stacks of old television sets.

Debbie Goodin was one of the hundreds of people dropping off items Saturday afternoon.

Goodin said she'd brought more material at one of the summer E-scrap drives, but that she still had old computer equipment and printer cartridges to recycle.

"I just think this is great for the community because otherwise this would end up in a trash dump somewhere," the Terre Haute resident said.

Ulm said the group had no indication that the quantity would be that great Saturday.

"I think people are sensitive to the idea that they can't just throw this stuff out, but there's no alternative," he said.

Saturday's project was jointly-sponsored by Trees Inc., the ISU Recycling Center and Indianapolis RecycleForce.

RecycleForce is an Indiana Workforce Development effort out of Indianapolis which hires recently released prisoners to process and recycle electronics.

The program provides the individuals with job training and references for future employment.

Ethan Norris, 8, a Hoosier Prairie Elementary School student, was one of the volunteers working the program.

Norris' mother, Wendy, was helping sort materials while he managed cash donations and the headquarters tent.

Norris said it had been a good experience, and when asked why people should recycle said, "so they can save the Earth."

Ulm said the group would sponsor more programs of this nature but he wasn't sure when.