

### **Small Business Corner: Spring Back Colorado in Fort Collins**

Christopher Conway had his "aha" moment about homelessness in 2006.

In his former career as a custom home builder in Boulder, he was seeking greater fulfillment and signed up to volunteer at the Denver Rescue Mission. He realized he could be integral in helping members of the disenfranchised community get back on their feet.

A friend had told him about a pilot program that was being launched in Nashville that connected men in transition with work opportunities through mattress recycling. He was intrigued and made a visit to the program and found "the men were productive, they were engaged in something of value, they had purpose and they were liberated through an earned income."

Conway brought this back to Colorado where he started a business that was founded on the triple bottom line model and created Spring Back Colorado mattress recycling, which has now expanded to Fort Collins.

Spring Back is a Denver-based non-profit that employs people emerging from drug and alcohol recovery programs and offers redemptive employment through mattress recycling. Spring Back has met with sustainable success and has brought their redemptive employment program to Fort Collins and Colorado Springs while developing spoke and hub locations in Pitkin County, Steamboat Springs and soon Summit County.

Spring Back Colorado recycles 93 percent of a mattress and 100 percent of a box spring while using their recycled product to provide material for the carpet pad, cellulose insulation and steel industry.

This summer, Spring Back was one of five projects funded through the Innovate Fort Collins Challenge - a City of Fort Collins competition that engaged the community in meeting the ambitious goals associated with the Climate Action Plan. Spring Back also participated in several special mattress recycling collection events with the City in 2017.

"Our goal is to serve all of Colorado and expansion just made sense in that we could provide more gainful employment and provide our landfill diversion services to northern Colorado from Longmont to the Wyoming border. Northern Colorado have been great partners in our first year of operation and the City of Fort Collins has been our biggest supporter."

Throughout their operation Spring Back Colorado has helped 107 men and women since Conway created the company 5 years ago. In Fort Collins, he has six full-time employees who are processing 1,800 mattress and box springs per month and a dog bed-making micro business. This operation is keeping the majority of post-consumer bedding waste out of the landfill.

Between the Fort Collins and Denver operations, there is landfill diversion of nearly 70 million pounds, Conway said. The Denver operation is processing 5,300 mattress and box springs a month and is working to innovate the mattress recycling process as the secondary markets have proven to be unstable.

"If you believe in second chances, if you believe in being stewards of the environment, this model just makes sense." Conway said. "My whole goal is just to give these guys a shot at life again. I do not care where have come from - I am only interested in where you are going."

Spring Back North charges \$15.00 per piece recycled and offers a drop-off or a home pick-up service. Pick-up service has an associated transportation fee. For more information, go to [springbackco.org](http://springbackco.org).