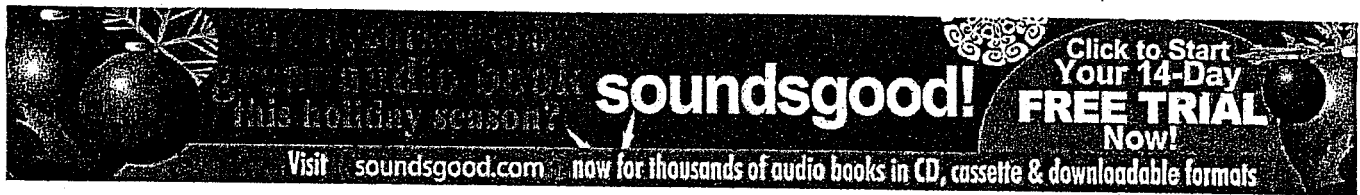


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From each according to his junk, to each according to her need

Need a pile of dirt? Got a pile of dirt? It's Christmas every day in the new world of freecycling.

 By Katharine Mieszkowski



Nov. 25, 2003 | Brad Wallis, 42, an erotic photographer who lives in Portland, Ore., works part time remodeling houses to support his art.

But over the past two months the self-described "starving artist" has developed a taste for giving his possessions away to strangers. "I don't have any money. I'm unemployed, but if I am able to give things to other people that make them happy and that they need, what a wonderful gift that is -- to me," he says.

On the Freecycle Portland mailing list, Wallis has offered up a bizarre accumulation of freebies that include large mirrors, art prints, tires, firewood, bike helmets, bicycle racks, trees, a sump pump, 12 Cuban cigars and even a whole computer.

"I was going to give away a computer case, but I ended up putting a hard drive in and an operating system to make it a completely working system," he says. "Because I could, because I didn't really need it, and I could make it a nicer gift to give to somebody."

Via Freecycle, Wallis has also received his share of gifts from people he'd never met before: a little tabletop fountain, a 35-millimeter camera, a toaster-oven and a mini-fridge.

"I grew up poor, and growing up poor you collect stuff, because you're never sure when you're going to need it and you can't buy it," says Wallis, who admits he has "packrat tendencies."

If a true packrat hordes, a "freecycler" can't stand to see something that might be useful to someone else go to waste, languishing unused in a musty garage, attic, bottom dresser-drawer or -- worse yet -- a landfill. That type of person has always existed, but today, thanks to the efficient distribution capabilities of the Internet, Wallis has joined forces with an entire tribe of thrifty givers. At Freecycle everything is free, and you can get rid of practically anything, from a pile of dirt to a beading loom.

In the face-to-face world, it's often hard to find that deserving person who needs your specific load of useless castoffs. Enter the Internet, which not only makes such networking easy but also has long been suffused with an ethic that promotes gift giving. Since May 2003, the Freecycle concept has exploded, spreading from city to city with the speed of a grass (roots) fire.

"A gift economy is different from anything that most people have ever experienced," says Albert Kaufman, 42, an unemployed activist and musician who is the moderator of the Portland freecycle list. With more than 2,000 members, it is one of the largest created so far. "It's pretty wonderful," Kaufman says. "It's sort of like Christmas all the time." Best of all: You don't have to buy anything new.

While eBay recasts clutter as a collection of valuable commodities to be marketed to the highest bidder, Freecycle magically transforms junk into presents, allowing almost anyone a chance to play Santa Claus channeling St. Francis. Which raises the question, what's really more valuable: Selling that 1980 Strawberry Shortcake lunchbox you've been carting around for decades for the best price possible? Or knowing that your much-neglected ice-cream maker, bread machine and transcription device have been given away to good homes where they may actually be turned on occasionally?

Besides the lofty altruism, freecycling is also about trying to get rid of junk: an old washing machine that may work but hasn't been hooked up in years, a jumbo dog-carrying cage for a dearly departed pooch, those coffee mugs that seem to breed and multiply in the kitchen cabinet. Lurking on the lists are the detritus of many abandoned projects and long-forsaken hobbies: On the Tucson list on Nov. 17 a woman's 10-pound bowling ball was up for grabs with this caveat: "It's grey marble color and unfortunately I had my name etched into it but I hope someone can use it and is a better bowler than I was!" The ball, along with a blue bowling-ball carrying case and a pair of "almost new" size 6 and a half bowling shoes, was spoken for in just 13 minutes.

Picture a vast junk box floating in the ether, spilling over with an inflatable raft, a clothesline, a 12-inch radial-arm saw, an Elmo sandbox, 18 post-mastectomy bras, three squashes, two rats, a rat cage and all sorts of other battered treasures, all flanked by a giant sign: FREE STUFF.

"We all have something that we don't want to admit that we're not using and will never use," says Deron Beal, 36, who started the very first Freecycle list in May 2003 in Tucson, Ariz., where he works part time for a nonprofit recycling group called Rise. Beal created the list as a way to hook other nonprofits up with the used couches, computers, office chairs, desks and file folders that the businesses he worked with no longer needed. Since then, the Tucson list has grown beyond the nonprofit world to include more than 1,600 members, and the concept has been adopted in more than 82 cities, including Kansas City, Orlando, Washington, Bangalore and Tokyo, with new lists now starting at the rate of 10 per week.

The ground rules are simple: Posts to the list indicate whether an item is an "offer" or "wanted" in the subject line, and there's no cash, barter or trade allowed. While offloading free stuff on the Net certainly isn't new to local community sites, Freecycle has spawned a mini-movement devoted to giving. Some people may get on the lists solely in search of freebies, but they soon start feeling the itch to part with their own extra filing cabinets, hearing aids and plasterboard.

Sometimes the goal of wasting-not is taken to extremes. Bryan Cordova, 24, a recycling education coordinator for a nonprofit environmental organization who has given away cacti, towels and a twin bed on the Tucson list, recently found himself mailing a dog food coupon to a fellow freecycler. "It was a coupon for a free bag of dog food," he says. "It wasn't a brand that I was planning on purchasing for my dog. It was just a few dollars' value, but why let it go to waste?"

Unlike donating to a charity such as Goodwill, freecycling puts the giver in touch with the people who will be benefiting from his or her largesse: "You deal with them directly so you know that the person who is getting what you're giving away is somebody who needs it," says Anna Harrison Griessel, a 39-year-old video and film producer who lives in Green Valley, Ariz. Griessel has given away five bags of clothes, a Microsoft keyboard, piano books and cookbooks on the Tucson list.

There's the added incentive that it takes less effort to shoot an e-mail out offering a single item than mustering up the energy to clean out a whole closet to justify a trip to the Salvation Army. And freecyclers argue that they do reach the needy who can't afford to log on for freebies via the many nonprofits that frequent the lists.

Once you start giving things away on the list and meeting the people who want them, the game of giving can become an end in itself. "It's just sort of fun now to walk through my house one room at a time and see what I can get rid of," says Griessel.

"Paying it forward" and "karma" pervade the way freecyclers think about their lists. "People are always talking about doing the right thing and helping your fellow man and saving the environment," says Martha Blake, 36, a stay-at-home mother in White Salmon, Wash., who is the moderator for the [Columbia Gorge Freecycle list](#), which has 203 members. "We all have really good intentions and have all these dreams of things we want to do to help, but we always seem to be stuck in our everyday things and never get to those. This is kind of handed to them on a silver platter: This is your chance." She received an old bookshelf from the list, which she converted into a ferret playground, and gave away a fish and a fish tank to a local 7-year-old boy whose mother didn't want him to have a more labor-intensive animal as his first pet.

The spread of freecycling, however eco-friendly a way it may be to relieve chronic overconsumption, does raise the not-so-ideal prospect of perpetual junk shuffling -- as soon as you get rid of your clutter, you take on someone else's. But maybe that will turn out to be the Internet's greatest gift -- in the future, there will be *no* junk, because every last thing will have found its way to a person who truly needs and appreciates it.

About the writer

[Katharine Mieszkowski](#) is a senior writer for Salon Technology.

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Is online shopping good for the environment or just a better way to be as wasteful as we want to be?

By Katharine Mieszkowski

12/07/00

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January 27, 2004

Section: Business

FREECYCLING MOVEMENT GAINS GROUND IN VALLEY FROM TRASH TO TREASURE: GOODS GIVEN AWAY, PUT TO NEW USES

MIKE CASSIDY column

We are a consumer nation. Update. Upgrade. Buy. Buy. Buy.

Which leaves us with stuff. Lots of stuff. Stuff in the garage, under our beds, in the back yard. Stuff headed for the landfills, which themselves are stuffed with stuff.

'And I have all this stuff,' says Lissy Abraham, of Sunnyvale, 'and I want to get rid of it. I just have to find the person who wants it.'

So in October, she started Silicon Valley's first **freecycling** community.

Yes, **freecycling** (www.freecycle.org). The movement started in Tucson, Ariz., last year and is now sweeping the nation. Really.

Think of it as eBay without the money and with a dose of 'think globally, act locally.' **Freecyclers** use Yahoo Groups as a free bulletin board, requiring registration only. Givers post their excess items on Yahoo and takers send an e-mail saying they will come and pick it up.

The Internet is how we do things -- sell cars, music, books, plane tickets. But it's also how many seek to change the world in big ways and small.

Freecycling is hardly earth-shattering. Of course it isn't the only way to give stuff away. There are trucks from charities to pick up what you don't need. There are cardboard 'free' signs attached to couches, computers and filing cabinets on our curbs.

And there are other Internet-enabled giveaway programs, such as the 'free stuff' area on Craig's List.

But **freecycling** is hot.

'We think it's great,' says Mark Bowers, who manages Sunnyvale's solid waste program and is therefore well-acquainted with the disposal of excess. 'We love this kind of

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grass-roots stuff, where people are exchanging those items.'

The movement is growing through viral marketing. Since the Tucson chapter started in May, nearly 200 groups have formed throughout the United States and in Canada, Australia, India, Britain, South Korea, Singapore, Japan and Romania.

The array of unwanted items is vast. Desks, bikes, books, lamps, couches, sure. But also a diaper genie, 10 pounds of batteries, succulent plants and gravel. Yes, rocks.

Together, the groups provide a study of the human condition, materially and more. Some of the older and larger groups have gone beyond the basic give and take.

In Portland, **freecyclers** collected Christmas presents and distributed them to the unemployed and their families, Rosemary Meyer, of Portland, writes by e-mail.

The spirit is contagious.

Aseem Das, of Palo Alto, heard about **freecycling** through an e-mail from an acquaintance. He jumped all over the idea and started **Freecycle** Palo Alto in December.

'It kind of tied in with that whole idea of consuming less, or if you have stuff, you might give it to other people who need it,' Das says.

Other groups targeting San Jose and the greater South Bay also have formed, together attracting more than 200 members so far.

Das, whose group has 75 members, says membership has been building slowly. But he's an optimist. Besides, he already has moved a 13-inch television and a neighbor's baby stroller.

Abraham, whose Sunnyvale group has 264 members, says local founders are talking about combining their groups.

In the meantime, the groups are open to all regardless of where they live.

And one thing you can be sure about: There is plenty of stuff to go around.

Photos (2)

PHOTO JOANNE HOYOUNG LEE -- MERCURY NEWS\Aseem Das started **Freecycle** Palo Alto in December. He is offering old carpeting, and already has moved a 13-inch television and a neighbor's baby stroller.\ PHOTO JOANNE HOYOUNG LEE -- MERCURY NEWS\Sylvia Dolce and her husband, Aseem Das, are using freecycle.org to find a new home for a roll of surplus carpet and other items.

Silicon Valley Dispatches

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March 16, 2004

Section: B

One Sock, With Holes? I'll Take It; **Freecycling** Brings Castoff Goods Back From the Bin

TINA KELLEY

Web site freecycle.org was created by Deron Beal to give people opportunity to exchange unwanted items that are still usable, with proviso that everything is free; Beal hopes site will grow and become nonprofit group, with idea of **freecyclers** meeting international needs (M)

Wanted: old socks, "ripped, without partners, and of any size or color." Offered: a telephone pole. Wanted: a chicken coop, a doghouse, a barn. Offered: "Excellent quality landscaping rocks. Organic lemons will be given away to those who take the rocks as an extra bonus."

The Internet has fed dreams of unimaginable wealth, a hope that in many cases turned out to be as fleeting as an instant message. It began as a way for the military and then academia to communicate, with little thought to profit, before evolving into a worldwide marketplace. Now one group is using the Internet as a way to make connections and fall into riches at the same time. In this case, the treasure comes in the form of someone else's trash.

Dusty but new exercise equipment, a five-person hot tub, and enough white Ikea bookshelves to furnish a small college town have been posted online through a new group that practices **freecycling**, the giving away of useful but unwanted goods to keep them out of landfills and maybe help someone less fortunate in the process.

The Web site has become a haven for newlyweds with empty homes, and retirees with full ones. In New York City, there's the added incentive of freeing space in minivan-size apartments, where a spice rack can take up too much room.

Like many staples of the Internet, this pretty much came about by accident. Deron Beal, 36, who works at a recycling nonprofit group in Tucson, sent an e-mail message in May to everyone he knew, to see if they wanted a queen-size bed and some packing peanuts he no longer needed. He subsequently set up a Web site where people could exchange unwanted items, the only constraint being that the items had to be free. "Legal and appropriate for all ages" was added later. The Web site, www.freecycle.org, was born, and 10 months later,

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more than 35,000 people have signed up in cities all over the world.

Postings are moderated by volunteers in local groups, who have mulled over the ethics of posting Playboys, puppies and pistols. They have had to deal with suspicions that perhaps the people who were posting too many "wanted" listings in one Arizona city were taking goods south of the border to sell in Mexico. ("We figured we were working for a good cause by keeping things out of the landfill," Mr. Beal said. "That was the main thing, and beyond that let the gifter beware.") And they have pondered what to do with people who occasionally forget to stop by to pick up the couch left on the porch for them.

Mr. Beal recalls a favorite post, with the heading, "OFFER: black hair dye, tonight only." It continued, "Clairol Balsam permanent hair dye in black, already mixed up and ready to go. My hair is short, so the bottle is still mostly full. But it needs to be used really soon, so if anyone has an urge to go darker, tonight is the night!"

Mr. Beal said: "Every once in a while someone will try to **freecycle** themselves -- "OFFER: nice guy to good home" or "WANTED: cure for a lonely heart."

But others don't see the humor in it. "I think personally, in this day and age, it would probably be too frightening to post things online to have strangers to come to your home," said Ivy Lester, who is from Dallas but was visiting New York City, where she grew up.

Although she could see **freecycling** for a good cause, the idea of a stranger coming by to pick up an item, even from a doorstep, did not appeal to her. "The Internet is so impersonal, and you have to be so careful nowadays," she said.

But mostly, members of the New York City **freecycling** group have been pleased with the cross-country skis they received just before a snowstorm, or happy to have met the need of the guy who refurbishes computer systems for use in day care centers.

That man, Cornell D. Green, posted, "If you're looking at that old 486 in the basement and can't stop laughing, please contact me." Nancy Schubiger, one of the six people who responded to his request, delivered a vanload of computer components to him at a park-and-ride lot in New Jersey on a recent Friday, then wrote to him, "Glad that they won't be dust-gathering paperweights!"

The New York City **freecycling** group has about 300 members, but the Portland, Ore., group has 10 times as many.

"I'm not sure it has a limit," said Christina Salvi, 28, who estimated she has spent half an hour a night moderating the New York group, making sure the postings were marked as Wanted or Offered, and keeping spam, politics and crankiness out of the discourse.

Of course, there are other ways to find free or cheap things in the city, like walking down the street in many neighborhoods the night before trash day. Thrift stores provide bargains. Also online is Craigslist.org, which includes a section of free items, and New York WasteMatch, sponsored by the Department of Sanitation, which matches valuable

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commercial waste and surplus goods with organizations that need them. The city also runs Material for the Arts, which collects reusable items and distributes them to nonprofit arts groups.

Robin Nagle, who teaches a graduate anthropology class on garbage at New York University, said that the curb has been the destination of choice for unwanted items only since the end of World War II.

"You never simply got rid of something because you didn't like it anymore," she said. "You'd turn it into something else." Old adult clothes, for instance, would be resewn into children's clothes, then made into cushions or dolls or rags, then sold as "shoddy" to peddlers, who used old fabric to make paper. Scavengers would travel the city in rented carts in search of useful items.

Mr. Beal hopes to incorporate freecycle.org as a nonprofit group and raise money for its own Web page independent of Yahoo.com's group mail function, which it currently uses. He hopes the new site can help **freecyclers** meet international needs -- for instance, to send computers to Iran after an earthquake.

"We get it drilled into us on television ads: 'Consume, consume, consume. You want more, you need more,' and do we really?" Mr. Beal asked. "I think what's coming out with **freecycling** is, 'Gee, it's kind of fun not to be into all this.'"

As for the wanted old socks, they were destined to be made into puppets in a class for adults with developmental disabilities. The telephone pole, at last inquiry, was still available, in Oregon. So were the rocks and lemons, together, in San Francisco.

Photos (Photos by Left, Associated Press; Above: Jim Cummins for The New York Times)

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[Gambits & Gadgets in the World of Technology]

Octopus Opulence

Microsoft Corp. co-founder Paul Allen typically likes to keep a low profile, but he made a big splash at this week's convention of the National Cable and Telecommunications Association in New Orleans by hosting several lavish parties aboard his new 413-foot yacht, Octopus.

Mr. Allen docked it on the Mississippi River behind the convention center and hosted receptions for several of his companies that serve the cable industry, including Digeo Inc. and Oxygen Media Inc. Mr. Allen's security force kept a watchful eye to make sure the media stayed onshore. But guests reported that the boat was over the top -- even by billionaire-yacht standards. Details include: teak floors, a theater and basketball court, two helicopter pads and a sound-mixing studio large enough, guests were told, to produce a major motion picture. For times when Mr. Allen feels like roughing it, the yacht ports a 60-foot yacht and eventually will boast a 10-person submarine that will run on fuel cells so it can stay under water for as long as two weeks.

The opulence of Octopus -- estimates of its price started at \$200 million -- may have stirred a bit of yacht-envy on the part of some of the other moguls at the gathering. Take the exchange that happened at one session that featured Mr. Allen, Comcast Corp. Chief Executive Brian Roberts and Time Warner Inc. Chief Executive Richard Parsons. Asked whether Time Warner would bid for Adelphia Communications Corp., Mr. Parsons stopped in the middle of confirming his interest and said: "I've changed my mind. We're going for a boat."

"I can help you on that," chimed in Mr. Allen, who also owns at least one other yacht.

Mothers Online

As any busy mother will tell you, the Internet can be a huge time saver when it comes to tasks like getting homework help and paying bills.

A new survey shows women are turning to the Web for more than that: Forty-eight percent of those who responded to a survey by Opinion Research Corp. for America Online Inc. said they stay in touch with loved ones by sending photos online. Fully 75% use the Web to plan trips. Seventy-one percent get news, 63% look for recipes, 55% click for coupons and discounts, and 42% pay their taxes online.

Nearly 55% of the 1,653 women who opted to respond to the survey play games online, most frequently with their children. Thirty-nine percent use the Web to help with homework, and 38% to shop.

That doesn't surprise Lynne Builta, who four years ago launched an online site Mommyshop.com. Ms. Builta is projecting sales of \$1 million this year, up from \$27,000 in 2000. She says many new mothers find they need lots of new gear. They can go online and have the products delivered to their doorstep. Once she had her second child, Ms. Builta said, "I shopped online for everything."

Spring Sweep

With the dreaded spring-cleaning season under way, there is a new, Internet-based alternative for getting rid of all that clutter in the basement and garage.

Known as "freecycling," the approach creates Web-based communities in cities across the country that allow members to post by e-mail a listing of items they are looking to unload. The catch? Everything must be given away free.

The freecycle movement has gained a modest measure of success since it was launched in May 2003 by Deron Beal of Rise Inc., a nonprofit organization in Tucson, Ariz. that promotes recycling initiatives. There are now

freecycling groups in 412 cities with 61,000 members. The largest, in Portland, Ore., has 4,723 members.

There are few limits on the kinds of items given away or sought. Typical items offered up include unused exercise equipment and storage boxes. Other items are more obscure. Recent listings in the Tucson area included someone looking for a reptile enclosure for their sick water dragon; another person offering up left-handed garden gloves and someone looking to unload a hot tub.

Membership is free and is organized through Yahoo groups. Information about freecycling is available at www.freecycle.org.

Big Blue Fights Back

International Business Machines Corp.'s investor-relations Web site featured something new on Monday -- an attack on a Wall Street analyst's view of its future. The message: "We believe [investors] should question the report's conclusions."

IBM didn't identify the analyst, but competitors quickly realized it was Toni Sacconaghi of Sanford C. Bernstein & Co., a research house. Mr. Sacconaghi has been saying for months that IBM's long-term growth of per-share earnings will be 7% to 9% annually, significantly lower than the "double digit" growth that IBM publicly targets. Barron's magazine cited Mr. Sacconaghi's forecast over the weekend, and that apparently triggered IBM's uncharacteristic outburst. Other Wall Street analysts who generally are more bullish on IBM said they couldn't recall a similar published refutation of an analyst's work. IBM's statement said the Bernstein report was based on historical analysis that doesn't consider the "increased competitiveness of IBM's products."

Mr. Sacconaghi says IBM hadn't contacted him and he was surprised to learn of the Web-site message. He noted that he has been saying for more than a year that IBM's long-term growth in sales will be around 5% and per-share earnings will be less than 10%. He added: "It's unclear why it elicited an unprecedented response."

An IBM spokesman said "it's good governance to keep investors informed." He added that the "statement speaks for itself" and said Herve Parks, IBM's veteran investor-relations chief, wouldn't be available to comment.

Digits was compiled by Ann Grimes, with contributions from Peter Grant, David Armstrong and William Bulkeley.

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Most Beautiful People

Free For All

Got a used hot tub to unload? Or a stuffed armadillo? Givers find takers on Deron Beal's "freecycling" Web site

Richard Jerome Strawberry Saroyan In Los Angeles

In November 2002 Deron Beal hired on as a manager for RISE, a non-profit that provides a recycling service for local businesses in Tucson. It didn't take long to realize he had a problem. "The businesses started giving us all this stuff that's not recyclable but that they don't want to throw away," he says. "Computers, desks. I didn't know what to do with it, but I couldn't bear to say no."

Beal tried giving the items to charity but after hours of calls scarcely made a dent. Then, last May, an epiphany: Why not set up a Web group where people can unload trash that might be someone else's treasure? A kind of cyber curbside. "I thought, 'If I give this a nifty name,'" says Beal, 36, "who knows?"

One year later Beal's site (www.freecycle.org) has become an Internet phenomenon with 53,000 members in 360 cities--including London, Tokyo, Sao Paulo and Melbourne. And just how does one **freecycle**? For starters, the network is broken down into local groups, each with its own volunteer moderator (collectively known as the "mod squad"). If there's an object, or even a service, you want to give or receive, you post an e-mail, leave a contact and, if someone bites, arrange for a pickup. The rules are simple: no politics or spam, and everything must be free. Some popular goods offered up: exercise equipment, moving boxes and anything related to gardening.

But the site attracts some decidedly uncommon offers and requests. There was the offer of a "'63-'64 schoolbus motorhome...NO Brakes." And a plea for wings, feathers and a stuffed armadillo for "extreme art purposes." One woman offered a mixed bottle of partially used hair dye: "It needs to be used really soon, so if anyone has an urge to go darker, tonight is the night." An Austin, Texas, **freecycler** who asked to be identified only by his user name "dancestoblue" offered fishing tackle--but only to someone who once had tackle stolen. "As a kid 34 years ago, give or take, I stole a tackle box," he explains. "There's no way

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I can find the person and make it right, so I'm trying to do the next best thing."

In many cases local **freecycling** groups have developed into Web-based communities where members help each other out. Oregonians Livia Vande and Larry Thompson scored not only a free photo album for their April 24 wedding, but free photography from a fellow **freecycler**. But they also gave back. "We helped a refugee family at Christmastime," says Vande. "We inherited a lot of stuff from Larry's grandmother and tried to give them as much as we could to start a little household."

Beal is thrilled by the response. "It's inspiring," he says, "to see someone driving off with something of yours that they really need." Born in Lancaster, Ohio, he arrived at a career in recycling via a circuitous route. After earning a degree in foreign service at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and later an M.B.A., he worked as a finance manager for Procter & Gamble and studied literature in Germany. He considered teaching, then switched to environmentalism and settled in Tucson in 1999. An admitted "computer illiterate," he started his **freecycling** venture with an e-mail to just 30 or 40 friends. When he set up the site in Tucson, the group snowballed, and he got some tech help. At the bungalow home he shares with his wife of nine months, pastry chef Jennifer Columbus, 37, Beal tries to live the **freecycling** life--with mixed results. Sure, Columbus would like him to clear out the shed. "But there's a difference between a weird pack rat and Deron," she says. "He has everything splayed out, but it's not, like, gross." Though he makes no income from **freecycling**, Beal has reaped rewards. "We got this great kitchen table," Columbus says, "and a neat old 1930s couch." It has given him some big ideas too, such as rallying his tens of thousands of members for good causes. "It has to grow up by itself," he says. "I'm just helping it along."

By Richard Jerome. Strawberry Saroyan in Los Angeles

NEED A PLUMBER? A SHRINK? A SATURDAY NIGHT DATE? MILLIONS ARE
FINDING IT ON CRAIGSLIST

"I need a wife," begins one candid personal ad. Others troll for jobs and apartments. One guy wants a stooge to take the CPA ethics test for him. Welcome to the eclectic world of the daddy of online community bulletin boards: craigslist--Irreverent cyber-classifieds that attract millions of viewers in 35 cities. "Craig" is Craig Newmark, 51, a self-styled computer nerd who one day in 1995 innocently sent out e-mails about upcoming events in San Francisco to a bunch of friends. "People started sending me more stuff to put on the list, and more people asked to be added to it," he says. Newmark charges only job posters in the Bay Area to make a living and pay his staff of 14. The rest post for free. "Everyone else can make as much as they want," he says. "But nerd values suggest you live comfortably--then try to change the world."

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COLOR PHOTO: COMPOSITE PHOTO "There's something radical about getting something for nothing," says Beal (at his recycling job in Tucson, with items posted on his site).

TWO COLOR PHOTOS: PHOTOGRAPHS BY WERNER SEGARRA

COLOR PHOTO: PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID PAUL MORRIS Craig Newmark (in San Francisco) added a barter section to his site.

----- INDEX REFERENCES -----

COMPANY: PROCTER AND GAMBLE CO (THE)

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