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Climate Summer cyclists help Peace Trust with recycling project

By [Janice Steinhagen - Staff Writer](#)

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Ellie Fausold of the Climate Summer team uses a screwdriver to take apart a cable TV amplifier box. Photos by Janice Steinhagen.

Heat that was inching up toward three digits didn't deter five young cyclists from pedaling into Voluntown to spread the word about sustainable living.

Members of the Connecticut-Rhode Island team of Climate Summer, a network-building effort of the Better Future Project, rolled into the driveway at the Voluntown Peace Trust on July 19.

The cyclists helped VPT members and other volunteers with an on-going recycling project, taking apart discarded cable TV amplifiers that would otherwise be tossed away. Instead, the disassembled components were sorted, with the parts to be sold to scrap dealers to benefit the VPT.

"It doesn't look pretty," said VPT land steward Karen Colberg of the picnic table covered with motherboards, hand tools and aluminum components. "But it's not ending up in a landfill."

"A lot of recycling of electronics in general is really problematic," said Climate Summer team member Tara Escudera of Long Island. "They're made to break."

While manufacturing and selling goods isn't inherently bad, she said, the long-term effects have to be considered. If recycling can't be done easily and effectively, landfills fill up with goods designed for "planned obsolescence" or haphazardly "recycled," allowing toxic components to pollute the environment.

"In developing countries, they smack open TVs and take out a few parts" for sale as scrap, Escudera said. That process exposes "recyclers" to dangerous chemicals and fouls the environment. "It's good that we're doing this here and doing it safely," she said.

One VPT volunteer who declined to give his name said that last year, the trust "passed the hat" in an effort to raise money for a much-needed paint job on the house. "We came up with \$150," he said.

But when a few pallets of the amplifiers came into their hands through a corporate donation, they were able to generate another \$800 from the sale of the parts, he said.

"We get about five cents a pound for the PC boards, 10 cents for the steel and 30 cents for the stainless," he said. Prices do fluctuate, he noted. "Bulk aluminum is going at about 40 cents a pound. When it's less than that, we wait till it goes up [to sell it]."

He estimated that the pile of "junk" on the picnic table and the adjacent crates of parts would bring about \$200 to \$300.

Ellie Fausold, media coordinator for the Climate Summer team, said that the group had logged 750 miles on its planned 1,000-mile bicycle trek. The team members, most of whom are college students, are "trying to connect organizations who are working for the same thing... and trying to get a conversation going between groups of people so we can build a more cohesive [sustainability]

movement," she said.

Along with five other teams traveling through New England, Climate Summer will also compile a "state of the movement report," which can serve as a resource for all the communities they've visited, Fausold said.

The cycling team visited Voluntown during its stay in the Westerly/Stonington/Mystic region, following a week in Bridgeport. They were slated to move on to New Haven after a week in this area.

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