

Gadgets aren't garbage

SUN-TIMES NEWS GROUP AND SUN STAFF

Sometimes, electronic items are simply too outdated to bring in any cash. But many believe simply tossing them in the trash is wasteful, since many electronics are recyclable. An assortment of options is available for computers and other kinds of e-waste.

Sprint, with offices in Orland Park, Lansing, Crestwood and Chicago, will recycle cell phones and donate profits to charity. In addition, Easter Seals, (312) 939-5115, and March of Dimes, (312) 435-4007, will reuse old cell phones.

Some computer companies, such as Dell (www.dell4me.com/recycling) and Hewlett-Packard (www.hp.com/recycle), sponsor in-house recycling programs.

Old computers also can be donated to Computers for Schools. The Chicago organization has collected more than 50,000 personal computers in its five years.

About 60 percent are delivered to schools, nonprofit groups or homes with at-risk children, Chief Executive Officer Willie Cade said.

Computers can be dropped off free of charge between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday at 3350 N. Kedzie Ave., Chicago; (800) 939-6000.

Computers in working condition also can be donated to Goodwill Industries in Orland Park, (708) 429-9030 (the Naperville location does not ac-

cept them, although cell phones are collected for recycling, a store spokeswoman said); the Salvation Army, (773) 445-4377, with various locations around the Chicago area; and Assistive Technology Exchange Network, a program of United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Chicago, in Tinley Park, (800) 476-2836.

If the only option is to trash the equipment, beware: Many communities do not allow computers to be tossed in with everyday trash.

Computers contain lead, which can be hazardous when released in a landfill. Consumer electronics, Intercón's Web site states, account for 40 percent of lead found in landfills.

Waste Management will not dispose of old computer hard drives in landfills. Company officials recommend you take the PC to a computer drop-off site, such as the one that operates on weekends behind Fire Station 4, 1979 Brookdale Road in Naperville. Hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency coordinates one-day household waste collections each spring and fall. Contact the agency at (217) 785-8604.

The Will County Land Use Department sponsors an annual drop-off for large electronic equipment. It will be held sometime this spring. For updates, call (815) 727-8834 or visit www.willcountylanduse.com.