

inside & out

Boulder center loans tools to eco- smart homeowners

By **Elana Ashanti Jefferson**
The Denver Post

Posted: 12/18/2010 01:00:00 AM MST



Cam Adibi, operations coordinator of the ReSource Tool Library, works at the facility in east Boulder. (Photos by David Zalubowski, Special to The Denver Post)

It's the first rule of home improvement: the right tool for the job.

But some do-it-yourselfers get waylaid in their

home repairs because gathering up all those "right tools" is a job in itself, not to mention expensive.

And what happens to all those tools purchased for just one job? The worst-case scenario, as far as Boulder's Center for Resource Conservation is concerned, is that they end up in landfills.

Their solution? To open a full-time tool library, where individuals and community groups can donate unused tools, and anyone in Colorado can pay an annual membership fee to borrow any number of tools they might need.

The Center for Resource Conservation was already running the ReSource Yard, a place to

purchase used building materials. Earlier this month, CRC's tool library opened next door.

"Having them side by side enables people to come and shop for their materials and then borrow tools for their project," says Adam Jackaway.

He trained as an architect and engineer, worked for years as a sustainable-design consultant, then walked away from that to launch CRC's tool library, which is modeled in part after a long-standing tool library in Berkeley, Calif.

"The tool library promotes the sharing of resources," Jackaway says. "It reduces consumption and purchasing and allows us to share things that are not used every day."

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Any Colorado resident 18 and older can borrow tools after paying the annual membership fee, which is \$25 for individuals, \$100 for nonprofits, and \$100-\$200 for businesses. The library looks something like a hardware store with tools organized by category: carpentry and woodworking; carpet and flooring; concrete, cement and masonry; electrical and wiring; gardening and landscaping; painting and drywall; and so on.

There are currently about 2,000 tools, new and used, in the library inventory. The library staff gives members a quick tutorial on the tools they've selected before sending them on their way.

Members can keep a tool for up to a week. And just like a traditional book library, there are late fees. In this case, keeping a tool past its due date will net a fee of \$5 per day.

CRC director Keith Frausto was first presented with the tool library idea about a year ago. "I thought it was a fantastic fit for the ReSource Center," he says.

Frausto's background is in community development. He noticed that a similar tool-loan program in Aurora encouraged stronger, better neighborhoods there.

"A lot of the (code violations) people were cited for were totally preventable," Frausto says. Easy access to tools can encourage better property stewardship.

And the benefit runs both ways.

"As a homeowner, I know I've got tools in my garage that haven't been used in 10 years," Frausto says. "In terms of saving money for the homeowner and keeping tools from being thrown away, the tool library is great."

The Center for ReSource Conservation's ReSource Yard and tool library are at 6400 Arapahoe Road, Boulder. The tool library is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. To inquire about donating tools, volunteering or for general information, call 303-419-8534 or visit conservationcenter.org/ToolLibrary.htm.

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