Alumna Takes Recycling to New Level

Karyn Gerred BFA '89 (Painting) is founder/executive director of The Resource Exchange, a Philadelphia-based nonprofit creative reuse center

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For Karyn Gerred BFA '89 (Painting), "plastic" is a dirty word. And don't get her started on the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. But it was this penchant for being green that led to the creation of the Resource Exchange (RE), a nonprofit creative reuse center in Philadelphia.

With a background as a scenic painter for film and theater, Gerred saw a need to reuse temporary set materials that were being discarded and ending up in landfills. Her answer: The Resource Exchange.

Founded in 2009 to spur more sustainable practices within the local arts and entertainment industries, RE is dedicated to promoting creative reuse, recycling and resource conservation by diverting valuable materials from the waste stream and redirecting them to artists, builders, educators and the general public.

The organization's dedicated, all-volunteer staff started out salvaging set materials out of temporary storage spaces, eventually landing a short-term lease in the Philadelphia Navy Yard where many local films have been built and shot.

Since 2012, the Resource Exchange has grown significantly, resulting in the creation of three staff positions and the opening of its new, open-to-the-public retail store at 2829 Cedar Street in Philly's Port Richmond section, where it continues to put an increasingly diverse amount of valuable, reusable material back into the local economy.