

## **THE DRIVE-BY THAT DROVE CHANGE: A STUDENT'S QUICK ACTION SPARKED A WASTE DIVERSION WIN BY SHELLY CODNER – AREA 2**

It all started with a simple drive down University Avenue in Ames, when Iowa State graduate student Elizabeth Ortiz spotted something that sparked an idea: a pile of furniture destined for the dumpster at the Radisson Hotel. Though she'd never personally met anyone from the Iowa Waste Exchange, Elizabeth, familiar with waste diversion efforts from events like Sustainapalooza and Rummage Rampage, knew there had to be a better solution.



She stopped her car, walked into the hotel, and spoke directly with the receptionist who connected her with the project manager, Adam Daeges.



Elizabeth proactively informed him about programs like the Iowa Waste Exchange that could help divert those materials from the landfill. Daeges, was extremely interested in diverting the materials from the landfill and had actively been researching alternatives, reached out to the Iowa Waste Exchange.

This spontaneous, on-the-ground advocacy proved invaluable. As it turns out, the Radisson Hotel was midway through remodeling its third floor and had more renovations planned for the near future.

## A Collaborative Effort

The Iowa Waste Exchange quickly got to work, connecting Daeges with several local non-profits. The results have been remarkable.



On the very first day onsite, all of the table and floor lamps and chairs available were matched and earmarked for The Freestore in Des Moines. The Freestore, a volunteer-run furniture bank, provides free furniture and household items to

families in central Iowa who are rebuilding their lives after experiencing trauma like domestic violence, natural disasters, or criminal assault. They will likely continue to receive lamps and chairs throughout the renovation, space permitting.

The collaboration continues. Mattresses from the hotel's renovation are also being diverted. The first batch went to the Association of Youth Development and Enrichment (AYDE) in Des Moines next week. AYDE is a non-profit dedicated to providing humanitarian and relief assistance, with a strong focus on youth development, ensuring these items will benefit those in need.

This story is a testament to the power of individual initiative and collaborative partnerships. It highlights how proactive efforts can lead to significant waste diversion and provide much-needed resources to communities, demonstrating that the future of waste diversion is indeed

in good hands. Approximately 71 chairs, 84 mirrors, 80 floor lamps, 80 table lamps, 142 pieces of wall art, 72 sleeper sofas and 72 mattresses have found new homes saving the receiving organizations approximately \$17,370 in avoided purchases while also reducing the tipping and transportation fees associated with sending these items to the landfill.

For more information regarding the Iowa Waste Exchange visit [www.iowawasteexchange.org](http://www.iowawasteexchange.org).