

State Environmental Agency Names UTEC as 'Advocate of the Decade' for Mattress Recycling



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Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Planning John Beling and UTEC's Ricardo Febles. (Courtesy photograph.)

UTEC's mattress recycling program was recently named Advocate of the Decade for the Northeast Region by the state Department of Environmental Protection.

The award, part of state agency's 50th anniversary celebration, honors UTEC's for its mattress recycling program and impact on the environment. Area participating communities include Haverhill, Methuen, North Andover and other communities. UTEC's recycling program has more than doubled since Massachusetts banned mattress disposal in November 2022.

"I knew about UTEC because of its mattress recycling program, but they're way more than that," said MassDEP Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Planning John Beling, who presented the award. "This program is helping kids from tough situations. Rather than being punitive or incarcerative, the program is helping people get engaged and involved."

Each mattress is disassembled by hand, with approximately 85% of its materials recycled by weight, including steel, foam, wood and cotton.

Jaime, a former UTEC participant who was recently hired full-time at the mattress recycling operation in Lawrence said he has learned such skills as how to drive delivery trucks and operate forklifts and other equipment. "More than that," he said, "having this job has helped me get my own place and really focus on bettering myself."

Upon receiving the award, Ricardo Febles, UTEC's chief social enterprise officer, said, "For us, the work of social enterprises is a cool intersection to support: our environment, which affects all of us; the young adults in our community who deserve an opportunity; to employ meaningfully and provide living wage employment within our communities that we serve; and, of course, to serve northeastern Massachusetts and the Merrimack Valley."



From left to right, UTEC Director of Mattress Recycling Jason Bettencourt, MassDEP Commissioner Bonnie Heiple, UTEC Chief Social Enterprise Officer Ricardo Febles and UTEC CEO Gregg Croteau. (Courtesy photograph.)