

# BETTER BUSINESS



for members of the Denver/Boulder Better Business Bureau

July/August 2005

## Red, white...and confusing

As spring showers brought May flowers, the Denver metro area also came alive recently with a different kind of color—more than 125 shiny, red and white metal boxes in parking lots and shopping areas marked “CLOTHING AND SHOES.”

These wardrobe-sized bins would appear to be handy, new locations to drop off your discards for charity. And how about convenient—there are at least seven new boxes along South Broadway in an 11-mile stretch, some within sight of each other.

**But the boxes are not what they seem.**

While consumers and property owners have indicated to the BBB and local news media that they believed the boxes were supporting a charitable operation, there is small printed lettering on the boxes that states otherwise.

With the arrival of the boxes, the Denver area is the latest outpost of an international organization that not only isn't a charity—it was exposed 18 months ago as a for-profit venture—but is part of “Tvind,” an organization originating in Denmark. Some of the key members of Tvind have been money laundering, tax fraud and embezzlement, according to an article in *The Chicago Tribune* dated February 13, 2004.

The boxes are owned and placed by a group calling itself U'SAgain, which on its web site, [www.usagain.com](http://www.usagain.com), explains it is a “clothing recycling business” that sells your donated items to Third World Countries. In recent correspondence to the BBB, U'SAgain denies any connection



with the Tvind network.

**The BBB warns that while these shiny boxes give you a chance to get rid of unwanted clothing and even give you a warm feeling that you are helping someone less fortunate, the boxes are part of a large commercial operation that funds business operations here and abroad.**

Until the Denver/Boulder BBB started asking questions about U'SAgain, other BBBs did not report on the firm to advise potential donors of its commercial status. At least a dozen American cities have boxes, including Chicago, Seattle, Atlanta and Dallas, and the operation is at least four years old.

**“Our concern is that there is an assumption that such a box is a charity, and that donors either don't read the fine print, or don't think**

**twice. Convenience aside, we believe that thoughtful donors do care how programs are delivered, and who profits,” said Susan Liehe, BBB vice president of Public Affairs.**

Liehe noted that the BBB Wise Giving Alliance, in its national Survey of Donor Expectations in 2001, published the following findings, among others:

- 7 in 10 American adults say it is difficult to know whether a charity asking for their support is legitimate;
- 73% of those surveyed assign a top ranking to the importance of accuracy in a charity's advertising or promotion; and
- To help decide whether an organization deserves their support, 79% of the adults surveyed say it is very important to know the percentage of spending that goes toward charitable programs.

The complete survey findings are available at [www.give.org](http://www.give.org).

**As for the red and white boxes, the BBB advises local consumers to know who they're supporting when they donate clothing. “Consider that you have options to help Colorado's 501 (c) (3) nonprofits who use donated clothing operations to fund wages and essential programs for local residents with barriers to employment,” Liehe said.**

*Don't be fooled into supporting any organization that appears to be charitable in nature, but is not. The BBB's Wise Giving Alliance at [www.give.org](http://www.give.org) offers reports on hundreds of charitable organizations in the U.S. and individual reports on local nonprofits are available at [www.denverbbb.org](http://www.denverbbb.org) as well.*

## Family Fun Fair launches summer of learning, free information!



On June 12, nearly 800 consumers of all ages came out to the Denver Coliseum to take part in the BBB's first-ever Family Fun Fair. The half-day fair included exhibitor booths as well as food, games, entertainment, and door prizes.

“The fair was a great way to showcase the BBB's free services and introduce

our summer series of workshops. We aim to increase consumer awareness among the Latino community,” said **Anna de los Santos**, BBB Director of Latino Outreach.

This summer, the BBB is hosting free sessions that include both

Spanish- and English-speaking presenters on mortgages (July 16), buying a car (July 19) and finding a reliable source for home improvement or car repair (July 21).

The BBB would like to especially thank the volunteers from The Summer Minority Engineering Training (SUMMET) program at the Colorado School of Mines, who helped make the Family Fun Fair a great day. The science and engineering program combines class work, hands-on projects, industry tours, sporting activities and social events for 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade minority students to assist them in transitioning to the rigors of college.

The students took a break from their coursework to come to Denver and help out for the day. “We want to remind SUMMET students to remember their communities and support the communities that support them,” said **Jahi Simbai**, the group's leader.

For more information on the workshops or Latino outreach in the Denver marketplace, call 303.996.3995.



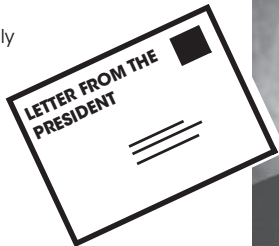
**Proveemos las llaves para tomar decisiones informadas**

“

The difference between a boss and a leader: a boss says, 'Go!' and a leader says, 'Let's go!'

”

E.M. Kelly



Jean Herman

### Do you ever need to ask for help?

We all ask people to help routinely. If you are like me and you are responsible for the effectiveness of your business, you ask for help all the time. "Can you prepare the monthly numbers for me? Will you edit this proposal for me? Will you help this customer for me?"

**But I'm not really talking about the kind of help that you receive from work colleagues. I am talking about asking and receiving help because you just can't do something yourself.**

Recently I was in a bicycle accident and broke both my thumbs. (I will never again fail to appreciate the value of opposable digits!) Once the immediate trauma of being bruised and scraped passed, I had to change my approach to formerly simple tasks. I wasn't consciously aware of having a personal philosophy of always doing things myself.

Now I HAVE to ask people for help. "Can you open this jar for me? Will you pick up these papers for me? Would you fasten this for me?" These simple requests have expanded my views on interpersonal relationships. The first observation is that everybody is willing to help you. Secondly, I now know that saying thank you many, many, many times a day is a personal blessing.

Our cover story is about a company that has built its business model on the core human characteristic that helping others makes you feel good. Donors feel good when they believe they have helped another person, sharing their abundance with someone in need.

**Unfortunately, companies like U'SAgain are making a profit on this motive. The BBB is proud of how we work with not for profits to help them meet BBB Wise Giving standards. We make our reliability reports on both local and national charities available on our website. All of us need to check on nonprofits—or in this case, for-profit companies—before we give of our time, money and talents. Giving back feels good. It is an American tradition to do so. Most people are intrinsically good, fair, and honest.**

I hope you and your company help others in our community that are in need. Just check first...so you not only feel good, but you know you are truly doing good as well.

On your behalf,

Jean R. Herman, CAE  
President & CEO

Jean welcomes your comments at [jherman@denverbbb.org](mailto:jherman@denverbbb.org) or 303.996.3961

## NO REPLY

If you are considering making a donation to a local charitable organization, please take note of the following list. These are the organizations in our database who have not responded during the current three-year reporting period (since June 14, 2002) to the Denver/Boulder BBB's request for a review according to the standards of the BBB Wise Giving Alliance ([www.give.org](http://www.give.org)). **They are not members of the BBB.**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult Care Management</li> <li>Aurora Interchurch Task Force</li> <li>Black United Fund of Colorado</li> <li>Bridgeway Shelters for Pregnant Teens</li> <li>CIRE</li> <li>Colorado Arts Consortium</li> <li>Colorado Assistance Center Inc.</li> <li>Colorado Association for School-Based Health</li> <li>Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council</li> <li>Colorado Business Committee for the Arts</li> <li>Colorado Christian Services</li> <li>Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence</li> <li>Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts</li> <li>Colorado Council on Economic Education</li> <li>Colorado League of Charter Schools</li> <li>Colorado Nonprofit Development Center</li> <li>Colorado State Fraternal Order</li> <li>Community Outreach Service Center Inc.</li> <li>Denver Center for Crime Victims</li> <li>Denver Options Inc.</li> <li>Elway Foundation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goodwill Industries of Denver</li> <li>Grandparents Resource Center</li> <li>Hospice Care of Boulder &amp; Broomfield Counties</li> <li>Institute for The New Man</li> <li>Kids in Need of Dentistry</li> <li>Krupka-Murr Gift &amp; Education Foundation</li> <li>Metro Denver Partners</li> <li>Morris Animal Foundation</li> <li>National Federation of the Blind of Colorado</li> <li>People Helping People Association</li> <li>Promise Keepers</li> <li>Rocky Mountain Childrens Clinic</li> <li>Rocky Mountain Human Services Coalition</li> <li>Rocky Mountain MS Center</li> <li>Seniors Inc.</li> <li>The Greatest Generations</li> <li>United Center, Inc.</li> <li>United Children's Fund</li> <li>Veterans For The Homeless</li> <li>Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program</li> </ul>
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The entities listing or omission of an organization on this list is not to be considered as an overall disapproval or endorsement of any organization. There is no legal requirement for an organization to respond to requests presented to them through the BBB. The publication of these names is not intended to imply wrongdoing on the part of the organization, but to provide information to our members and the public about their failure and/or unwillingness to respond to the Bureau. Be sure to double-check any organization's name, as many entities in the region have similar-sounding names. As a matter of policy, the BBB does not recommend, endorse or approve of any organization, product or service. BBB reports are based on our files over the past three years. If you would like a report on any of the above organizations, call our Inquiry Line at 303.758.2100 or go to [denverbbb.org](http://denverbbb.org). This report is intended for the use of BBB members and should not be reproduced in any way.



Membership was in the air at the BBB during the month of May. The Bureau sales team wanted to top its previous record of 161 new members, set in July 2004, by adding 200 companies to our roster this month.

Through terrific teamwork and professionalism, it turned out to be a record-setting month for the BBB with over **320 new members** joining with the BBB to promote better business in the Denver marketplace!

It was our Bureau's most successful month ever in membership development, topping not only our own records, but all new member sales records across the nation. Our Bureau had the most successful month ever on a national scale for Bureaus of comparably sized market areas.

"We are so proud to have this many new members this month. It just proves that the BBB's mission is alive and well in Denver," said **Robert Jellum**, BBB Vice President of Sales & Membership Development.

The two BBB Business Consultants who contributed the very most to this exceptional month were **Nancy McCleary** and **John Strand**: Nancy was top in number of new members and John was the leader in new revenue.

Across the board, the membership team's passion and effort was truly extraordinary. Operations and Administration staff members were teamed with the sales professionals for friendly motivation, competition and goal-setting, along with daily drawings for prizes from each day's lead sheets.

The new members joining in May bumped our total membership base up to more than 6,100.

These new members will enjoy all of the benefits of the BBB, including their company listing in our *2005-2006 Buyers' Guide and Member Directory*.

Have a question about your membership? Please call 303.758.1658.

www.denverbbb.org

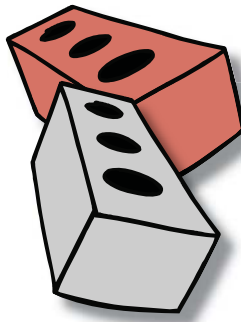
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## A taste of training

A noontime workshop, "Build it!" on Tuesday, July 26, will be the second of the BBB's four 2005 Build a Better Business programs at the Denver Athletic Club.

The initial workshop on May 3 centered on taking the vision of what you want to do with your business and turn it into ethical behavior in everyday professional proceedings.

Now it's time to take that committed value statement and form it into a solid team to move your business forward. It's not enough to instruct your team to "...just do the right thing." You must be precise and literal as you lead a values-based company.

Facilitator **Jim Davis** from First Bank's Evergreen branch will lead a panel through great ideas on:

- **How to recruit people who share your values;**
- **How to retain a team of "ethical experts" in every role;**
- **How to motivate people through transparency and greater accountability; and**
- **How to incorporate demonstrated values to employee performance.**

Here's a sample exercise from the upcoming program:

### What are your core customer values?

Name a company you have stopped doing business with. Why?

1.

2.

3.

Name a company you especially enjoy doing business with. Why?

Plan to join us on Tuesday, July 26, for more thought-provoking exercises to Build a Better Business! Just \$20 per person covers the training, complete workbook and lunch. For more information, call 303.996.3972.

3. Which of your positive or negative experiences as a customer or vendor of other businesses could be incorporated into evolving your own company's operations?



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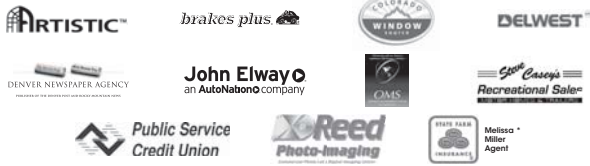


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## Public Service Credit Union

The advantages of credit union membership are better rates and fewer fees. Through the BBB's partnership with PSCU, these benefits are offered to members because the credit union is not for profit and member owned. Please call **PSCU at 303.639.2152** for more details.



## Pinnacol Assurance

The Denver/Boulder BBB has joined forces with Pinnacol Assurance to offer a group insurance option designed to reduce workers' compensation costs by promoting risk management and accident prevention plans in the workplace. Please call **Johnna at 303.996.3977** for more details.

## Smallwood

Through a unique partnership with Smallwood, the BBB can now offer its members smart, cost effective ways to control the growing costs of employee benefits. It's a smart plan that's a perfect fit! Just YOUR size! Please call **Karen Sweet** for more details, **303.468.7700 x211**.



## Mountain States Employers Council

BBB members with 10 employees or fewer receive a 40% discount on MSEC annual membership. MSEC is a provider of employment law, HR consulting, training and survey services. Please call **JoAnn Watson** for more details, **303.223.5383**.



## Consumers, complaints and cameras

The Denver/Boulder BBB was approached in April by 9News investigative reporter **Deborah Sherman** about helping investigate allegations that local car dealerships were mistreating Spanish-speaking consumers.

The BBB provided 9News with public information about complaints received, and further aided the investigation by having a BBB Latino volunteer work with a 9News staffer. The BBB volunteer knew only the pair was going to a number of dealerships to see what their experience was when negotiating for a car. The BBB did not know which dealerships were shopped until after the programs aired.

While at one dealership, the pair was approached by a dealership worker cautioning them to "be very careful when you go buy a car." The 9News staffer, wearing a hidden camera, caught the warning on tape. "Even the BBB volunteer did not know a hidden camera was being used during the two-day dealership investigation," said **Nancy Ford**, BBB Special Projects Manager.

Spanish language consumers have filed complaints with the BBB about sales contracts they sign not being what they were told. Sometimes the consumer alleges they thought they were buying a car, but found out later—sometimes years later—that they actually were leasing the car. In other cases, consumers allege bait and switch tactics and "packing the payments" have left them wanting out of the contracts.

# BETTER BUSINESS

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## CONTACT YOUR BBB

**Inquiries..... 303.758.2100**  
**Member Line..... 303.758.1658**  
**FAX ..... 303.758.8321**  
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**Web ..... denverbbb.org**  
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