

Montana

Business and Cooperative Programs • Rural Energy for America Program

Bringing Micro-Manufacturing Back to Main Street

When Carol Lynn Lapotka purchased an historic building on Polson, Mont.'s Main Street to house [REcreate Designs, LLC.](#), her small-batch manufacturing plant and artist co-op, she knew renovations would be needed.

So, this environmentally-focused entrepreneur applied for [USDA Rural Energy for America Program](#) grants to upgrade the windows and install new doors and lighting.

"I want to do what is right," Lapotka noted when discussing the desire to incorporate green building practices into her strategy. "I never want to pass up an opportunity because of money." With [USDA RD REAP](#) grant funds, and some additional incentives through [Mission Valley Power](#), Carol Lynn was able to refit her edifice, built in 1909, with LED lighting, energy-efficient windows, and insulated front doors. Since the 2020 retrofit, REcreate has realized nearly \$3,400 in cost savings and about a 50 percent reduction in energy use.



Lapotka includes the origin story for each of her items, including the new Indigo line, so customers understand the positive environmental impacts resulting from buying upcycled products and reducing landfill waste.

This provided Lapotka the funding needed to manufacture and donate 10,000 masks to her local community for the COVID-19 response and employ one full-time and two part-time employees in her Main Street shop, where it all happens.

Giving back is a critical part of Carol Lynn's business concept. She has positioned REcreate as a member of [1% for the Planet](#), donating 1% of their sales to local non-profits. Lapotka is on the Board of Directors for the [Polson Business Community](#), a [Made in Montana retailer](#), and a presenter of [the MADE fairs](#), an alternative arts and craft market. "My goal," Lapotka shares, "is to bring small-batch manufacturing, using raw materials resourced from area second-hand stores, back into the mainstream. It offers a different level of quality, professionalism and scale and keeps an estimated 3,000 pounds of waste out of our landfills every year." Additionally, REcreate is focusing on the online promotion of their artists so creators, like Carol Lynn, can connect with consumers to tell a product's origin story and educate them about Montana-based craftsmanship.

Obligation Amount: \$2,913 (2019); \$3,738 (2021)

Date of Obligation: 5/25/2019; 5/27/2021

Congressional District: Representative Rosendale Sr.; Senators Tester and Daines

Partners: None

Demographics: REcreate gives 1% back to local non-profits to provide better opportunities for Flathead County.

Impact: Energy savings resulted in mask manufacturing for the COVID-19 response, and contribution of funds to [Flathead Lakers](#), a non-profit working to protect the community's water resources.