Making a living and a difference

Jerry Hatcher, 57, lost his job as a warehouse worker for a HVAC wholesale distributor in March 2008, making him one of the early casualties of the recession.

"It was rough. It's like me and a thousand other people were going through this," he said. He quickly realized that he wasn't going to find another job in the industry.

"We've lost a lot of manufacturing and warehousing jobs," said the Vancouver father of four. So Hatcher took advantage of worker retraining programs through WorkSource and Clark College.

He decided to pursue a certificate in computer support. He hooked up with CREAM — Computer Reuse, Education and Marketing — for an internship. The nonprofit organization refurbishes computers that are still usable and disassembles and recycles ones that aren't.

Hatcher's internship led to a permanent job as CREAM's recycling manager. He was hired in July. "It just fit because they needed a warehouse person with computer skills," Hatcher said. But for Hatcher, it was about more than just breaking out of unemployment. He feels like he's doing something that makes a difference. CREAM keeps the hazardous waste found in electronics — including mercury, cadmium and lead — out of landfills.

"CREAM is an awesome place. I got to go into another career, but also into something that's really beneficial."

Bits 'n' Pieces appears Mondays and Fridays. If you have a story you'd like to share, call Features Editor Elisa Williams, 360-735-4561, or e-mail elisa.williams@columbian.com.

Clark baseball team takes the field

The Columbian

Not since 1992 has Clark College fielded a baseball team. That changes today as the Penguins host Central Oregon Community College in a doubleheader scheduled to start at noon.

The games will be played on the Clark College field, located just above the soccer field off Fort Vancouver Way.

Clark is fielding a club team this season with the goal of joining the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges for the 2010-11 season.