

COMMUNITY POWER

Partners on Waste Education & Reduction
Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board
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Sustainability Follow-Up Report Round 9 2009-10 Grantees

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The information in this report was gathered from follow-up interviews with Round 9 grantees whose projects ended in August of 2010. Follow-up was conducted with nine of the 18 grantees including: Ecopaulitans with Randolph Heights Elementary School and Capitol Hill School, St. Clements Episcopal Church, CommonBond Communities Skyline Towers, Transfiguration Catholic Church and School, Hastings Middle School, Girl Scouts River Valleys, Urban Arts Academy, St. Paul District 2 Community Council and Victory Neighborhood Organization.

The purpose of the follow-up interviews is to determine the lasting impact of the grant on the organization. The results are similar to findings from follow-ups with groups from the five previous years. As previously found, a high number of groups continue to offer some waste reduction education beyond the end of their contract with SWMCB.

Replicable products or programs

Of the groups interviewed, the Girl Scouts River Valleys and Victory Neighborhood Organization both created products which can be used and projects that could be replicated. The Girl Scouts River Valleys created the *Go Green Girl! Toolkit and Patch Program*. At Victory, a school teacher created a vermicomposting unit for 2nd graders and they wrote an article series that could be reused. Many of the other projects had aspects that could be replicated but none, besides the Girl Scouts and Victory Neighborhood, had anything in a format that can be easily transferred to another organization. What is useful is to know what activities were effective and continue to be sustained. Many of these activities are highlighted in the soon to be published Community POWER Toolkit. Any product or program that is developed as part of a grant project that can be accessed and implemented by a different community group with little or no cost. These products will continue to be included, when possible, in the grantee resources section on www.rethinkrecycling.com.

Continue Waste Reduction Programming

100% of groups interviewed continue to offer waste reduction information and/or programming past the grant period, reaching about 1,000 additional people.

As in past years, nearly all of the groups interviewed continue to educate and engage their audiences in waste and toxicity reduction after their grant ends. Round Nine grantees report they have actively engaged an additional 1,050 new people with waste reduction messages since their Community POWER grants ended in August of 2010.

Examples

At Randolph Heights Elementary School, they continue to do bottle cap collections and recycling and use it as a counting project for the kindergarten students. In addition, they have shown a music video and have sent home information about recycling.

At CommonBond Skyline Towers, they continue to educate residents to recycle in the building. Both Eureka Recycling and Ramsey County staff have been there to educate about proper recycling. As a result, they have increased recycling pick up to two times per week. Contamination of the recyclables has not been an issue.

At Transfiguration Catholic Church, a green tip of the week is highlighted in the Creation Care Corner and in the church bulletin. At the fall festival, they continue to reduce waste by streamlining purchasing and requiring cans only (no plastic cups). They borrow recycling containers from Ramsey County. These efforts have resulted in reducing the size of the garbage container required and increased the size of the recycling container.

At the school, they have experienced a change in leadership and financial challenges but continue their food to hogs program for lunch waste and teachers weave in waste reduction and composting topics into their curriculum. The student council is still involved in projects and they've distributed pledges on waste reduction behaviors at both school and home to reinforce what the children are learning.

At Hastings Middle School, the project created some on-going activities related to the grant. They continue to have a student green team, which now focuses on all aspects of creating a greener school environment (not just waste reduction). They also have an ongoing non-toxic cleaner workshop for teachers. Staff is very interested in and supportive of the non-toxic cleaner training and the continued training influences what they do. Many teachers are still using the non-toxic cleaner in their classrooms (and at home).

At Girl Scouts River Valleys, the two curriculums created during the grant period—the patch program toolkit and day camp curriculum—are ongoing. Last summer, three day camps used the curriculum. In addition, they've continued the Forever

Green council-wide community service project. This year the focus was sewer leaf clean up and labeling.

At the Urban Arts Academy, vermiculture composting in the classrooms continues, and they use washable towels and do not use disposable paper products at family nights. The Reuse Band, which performed at the Reuse Fair and the opening of the Light Rail in Minneapolis, is ongoing and is now releasing a CD.

At District 2 Community Council, they are composting at the community gardens. Residential leaders educate newcomers to the garden. They have recently also educated with the residents on how to use the compost in the soil. As Roosevelt homes, the residents continue to recycle and new residents are educated on recycling process.

At Victory Neighborhood Organization, they continue to offer gardening workshops which include a heavy emphasis on non-toxic gardening and composting. In addition, the science teacher at Success Academy continues to teach about vermicomposting and has given away worms to other, like members at his church and staff. At community meetings, staff use compostable coffee cups and educate participants about why they are being used and how to dispose.

Internal Waste Management

Waste reduction and internal waste management practices became a larger priority for all of the interviewed grantees. Many grantees report that waste reduction became a larger priority for their organization after participating in the grant. Most groups made changes to reduce waste in their office or building. Common changes include recycling more, starting to compost, and taking on more environmental actions.

Examples

At Randolph Heights Elementary School, ever since obtaining a recycling container from the Recycling Association of Minnesota, they are recycling more within the school.

At St. Clement's Episcopal Church, waste reduction has become integrated into the organization. For example, they have fixed the dishwasher to make it possible to use washable dishes. Many members of the green team are now leaders of the church and that has had an impact on church operations. For example, the property committee is now considering the toxicity of chemicals used in the church as well as how can they further reduce waste that is generated at the church. In this way, waste and toxicity reduction issues have infiltrated the church and this is a direct result of participation in Community POWER.

At CommonBond Skyline Towers, staff have found a unique way to reuse. Within Advantage Services, staff have begun a reuse prize table. At meetings, staff bring

unwanted stuff from their location to give away. This has been a popular activity to promote reuse.

At Transfiguration Catholic Church and School, they tapped into available resources and secured a waste assessment from RETAP (Retired Engineers Technical Assistance Program). They have made some improvements based on those recommendations. Additionally, the church has installed solar panels.

At the Urban Arts Academy, the interns and kids keep staff accountable through their actions. They are committed to washing dishes after each family night instead of using disposable dishware. Since the grant, they've started a compost bin outside for garden waste. In the new gardens, they are able to use the finished compost. They also put paper recycling bins throughout the building, which they share with other tenants. An environmental education internship was added to their curriculum. Last quarter, three college students received credit for participating in the program.

At Victory Neighborhood Organization, the staff use ceramic mugs in the office and compostable cups at meetings, they copy double-sided and purchase recycled paper. They also recycle ink cartridges.

Require Additional Funding

44% of groups required additional funding to continue their projects.

Several groups used their own operating budgets to continue their projects, while others have sought and received resources from other funders. Some groups report they would need additional funds for materials to continue their projects while others mentioned that they need more staff capacity to continue pieces of their projects. The following are additional barriers experienced by grantees to continuing their projects:

- Time, getting enough people interested in helping. [Randolph Heights Elementary School]
- Because the grant focused on volunteers to most of the work, the education efforts did not become the responsibility of staff. Therefore if they wish to continue educating church members about their own waste and toxicity reduction opportunities, it depends on volunteer leadership. [St. Clement's Episcopal Church]
- Lack of interest by some staff who were stretched thin with time. Some lack of interest by residents but surprised by the number of residents who are interested. The bags from Ramsey County helped overcome the lack of bins for apartments. [CommonBond Skyline Towers]
- Some set backs have included leadership change and financial challenges. In addition, one of the principal leaders on the church's Creation Care Committee experienced a home fire and as a result the committee is not currently active, on break until volunteers are able to become involved again. [Transfiguration]

- There has been interest in separating out food waste in the cafeteria for compost or hog feed, but the waste hauler is not willing to take this on. [Hastings Middle School]
- The Girl Scouts River Valleys will need to refocus efforts into the new national green program, once planning is complete.
- Funding is a barrier but also the constant change in kids participating in their programs and staff turnover. [Urban Arts Academy]
- They have not been able to get households to bring organic material to the garden compost—too many contamination issues. Since recycling at public housing sites is not required, the incentive to recycle is not high, which hurt education efforts to get residents to recycle more. [District 2 Community Council]
- The barriers at Victory Neighborhood Organization include lack of staff and volunteer time.

Feedback on Community POWER Program

When asked what was most helpful about the way Community POWER is structured (in terms of what helps the grantees to be successful in their projects), the most common response was technical support provided by project managers and county staff, followed by resource materials, grantee meetings, and funding.

Comments included:

All of the support they received was helpful, according to Mary. She enjoyed hearing about previous grantees challenges and materials from Ramsey County. Tara Roffler was helpful. [Randolph Heights Elementary School]

The grantee meetings were most helpful to network and learn what other grantees were accomplishing and struggling with. The resource materials from the county and Rethink Recycling were also helpful. [St. Clement's Episcopal Church]

The grant meetings were a great way to learn about resources. The technical support from county staff, program management staff and the MPCA was a highlight, especially Jean Buckley, who arranged for them to receive recycling bags and signs. [CommonBond Skyline Towers]

The funding was most important followed by the support from Washington County staff Dan Schoepke. He offered credibility and value when educating staff on waste issues. They also continue to use resources from Ramsey and Washington Counties as well as Rethink Recycling. [Transfiguration]

The funding from Community POWER was the most useful for the grant at Hastings Middle School.

The networking and learning from others at the grantee meeting was most valuable. [Girl Scouts River Valleys]

The funding and toolkits were a great help, although the button maker was broken when they received it. Rethink Recycling and E-Partner News are helpful. [Urban Arts Academy]

The funding was the most important part of participating in Community POWER. For them, it was a labor intensive project. Sue uses information from the Rethink Recycling email newsletters for their website, monthly column in the Eastside Review and in their newsletter. [District 2 Community Council]

The funding was most important and the meetings were inspirational and energizing. The resource materials from the county and Rethink Recycling were engaging and they are still using them. [Victory Neighborhood Organization]

More Environmental Behavior Changes

Community POWER serves as a catalyst for additional beneficial environmental changes. Often, once a person or organization begins to make changes to benefit the environment, like instituting waste reduction and recycling, other changes follow. Six of the nine responding grantees responded to questions regarding additional changes.

67% of the organizations have instituted things like energy and water conservation measures, and as a result of being involved with the Community POWER program.

In addition, 100% of the responding project managers stated that they have made personal changes in their own life, such as increasing waste reduction, recycling, composting, and other measures as a direct result of involvement in Community POWER.

Future Recommendations

Grantees were asked how Community POWER can continue to assist them in their waste reduction efforts. Many groups said they would like to be included on any relevant tips, resources, or training opportunities in the future. Responses appear below:

- Six of the eight interviewees expressed interest in the possible new grant round offering of mini grants up to \$5000 if they had less administrative burden to apply and report.
- Julia Earl was extremely helpful in writing and managing the grant. The project manager didn't feel she could have done it without help from someone with experience in grant writing.
- All of those interviewed said that the quarterly RethinkRecycling newsletter and the E-Partner News is useful and want to continue to receive.
- One interviewer said that being able to use funding to purchase a tiller would greatly support their residential community composting efforts by making it easier to use the finished compost.

- Another said that they discovered that they needed a stainless steel table for the food to hogs collection area in the cafeteria, costing about \$600. It would have been helpful to have been able to use some funding to make that capital expense.
- One said she'd like more support on how to continue to make waste reduction a priority.
- Offer more kits on topics like paper making, etc., which are hands on, interactive, and allow kids to physically do something.
- Outside of the Hennepin County Toolkit for Congregations, there are not many materials that focus specifically on tying religion and the environment.