



**COMMUNITY POWER:
ROUNDS 1 - 3
SUSTAINABILITY REPORT**
January 2006

Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board

General Findings/Conclusions

Following are significant findings from Community POWER based on interviews with 29 grantees from Rounds 1-3 (2001-3003) approximately one year after their grant ended. The purpose of these interviews was to determine the lasting impact of the grant, past the funding period.

- **Creation of replicable products and programs**

Products (such as the Girl Scout Council's Waste Reduction Toolkit for troop leaders) and *programs* (such as African Refugee Support Services' waste reduction workshop model) were created by 100% of the grantees. These can be accessed and implemented by new community groups with potentially little or no cost. Additional examples can be found on the Community POWER website www.greenguardian.com/CommunityPOWER.

- **On-going waste education**

While 100% of the organizations created a replicable program or project, 76% percent of the organizations will continue to use the product (such as a curriculum , video or kit) or offer the program (such as a waste reduction workshop). Fifty-nine percent of the groups trained new staff and/or volunteers to continue waste education projects.

- **New Audiences (based on interviews with Round 2 & 3 grantees only)**

Over 10,900 people were reached with waste reduction messages since the grant period ended (through newsletters, tours, handouts, plays etc.) Over 2,000 people were actively engaged in waste reduction activities since the grant period ended (swap days, workshops, composting projects, etc.)

- **Projects continue without funding**

Seventy-nine percent of the groups continued a project at some level with little or no additional funding.

- **Most useful part of Community POWER's structure**

Ninety percent of groups listed quarterly meetings and networking opportunities among the most important parts of the program structure. Seventy-nine percent of the groups said county and Cairn & Associates staff support was crucial to completing their projects.

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Recommendations

- Community POWER should continue to promote an array of replicable products and projects that can be accessed and utilized by other community groups. These should be promoted through the RFP, Community POWER and Green Guardian websites, and through displays and workshops at conferences.
- The current structure of Community POWER is effective. Seventy-nine percent of grantees said “nothing should be changed” and everything they needed was provided during the grant period. The remaining grantees had minor suggestions, of which several have already been implemented. These included regular email check-ins with grantees and an evaluation template for evaluating behavior change.
- Community POWER should consider creating a two-year continuation grant program, allowing some grantees to reapply for a second year of funding. This would further strengthen the organization’s ability to continue the project after funding ends, and give grantees another year to make waste reduction a more integral part of their organization's mission and activities. Since most of the grantees create a replicable project or product, this would also give them another, more focused, year to share this information with other community groups.
- Community POWER should consider doing a formal evaluation of the program using an outside evaluator. A focus of the evaluation would be a comparison of Community POWER to other grants programs in order to benchmark its relative success regarding sustainability and replicability. It would be useful to find out what we are doing well, and where we could make improvements, especially in the areas of replicability and sustainability.

Individual Grantee Summaries (Round 3)

- **Anoka Community Action Program (ACAP):** ACAP continues to incorporate waste reduction education into several of their core programs. Staff who were trained by Anoka County staff during the grant period continue to answer questions and distribute information on a variety of waste reduction topics. Volunteers through the Chore Program, a program where volunteers go to senior citizens homes to help with chores, educate and answer questions about where to take household hazardous waste. Senior Information Line workers have information available for callers on junk mail reduction, and outreach workers give a waste reduction packet to about twelve new people each month.

Other social service agencies and senior serving organizations could replicate ACAP’s program, although they would need to be appropriately trained by Anoka County staff.

- **Community Design Center:** Community Design Center continues to involve youth and community members in gardening and composting projects. They have also begun a community outreach program connecting their composting project with water quality protection initiatives. Thirty-two youth are currently being trained to be outreach workers on waste reduction and water quality protection as part of their Leadership Program. They are developing a PowerPoint presentation that the youth will take to neighborhood churches, schools and libraries to present to the public.

They have continued to present community workshops on toxicity reduction, rain gardens and composting, reaching over 240 people since the grant ended. They also continue to publish educational information about toxicity reduction and composting in their newsletter, which is distributed to over 400 individuals.

"I have been to a million meetings in my lifetime, and the Community POWER meetings were structured very well. Interaction with other grantees and county staff is very important, along with the final sharing. Great job!" -CDC Executive Director

- **Eritrean Community Center of Minnesota.** After the well advertised and attended collection event that the ECC held during their grant, many Eritrean people started thinking of the community center as a place to take problem materials. This unfortunately resulted in the "dumping" of CRTs in the backyard of the center after hours, because people thought the center would take care of them. In order to address this, a volunteer is writing a newsletter article on proper disposal, and they are considering organizing another collection event since there is a clear need. Parents whose children were involved in the youth training on CRTs have requested more programming of a similar nature.

- **Girl Scout Council of St. Croix Valley** The Girl Scouts created an on-going mechanism to promote waste reduction after their grant ended, and have expanded their grant-funded activities to new camps. They are an excellent example of a sustained project. They continue to use the summer camp composting system at the camp where it was established, engaging 800 girls each summer in learning about and creating compost. They also plan to expand the compost system to another camp they manage. Waste reduction became a larger priority for the organization at the camp level.

In response to the interest generated during the grant, staff created a permanent "Talkin' Trash" toolkit that can be checked out by troop leaders. By using the toolkit, troops of girls will learn about waste reduction and get involved in waste reduction activities for years to come.

"I have already received calls from other people who manage summer camps who are interested in replicating our composting program." Girl Scouts program manager

- **Guardian Angels Church** Since creating the "Harriette Potter and the Green Guardian" video during the grant period, over 900 DVDs of the short film have been distributed and shown at various outreach events. Youth at another church who saw the DVD were inspired to

create a video of their own. The project director created a successful initiative the year after the grant collecting used printer cartridges and cell phones from the congregation, which she described as a “natural outgrowth” of the Community POWER project. The church has made a strong commitment to using both sides of paper since participating in Community POWER and a new “environment” committee is now forming at the church.

- **Heart Of The Beast Puppet and Mask Theater (HOBT):** HOBT developed a puppet show/performance on waste reduction with their grant funds. The show continues to be offered by HOBT through their school programs and residency program. Since the grant ended, the performance has been shown to schools, libraries, and community groups, reaching over 750 audience members. Staff who developed the show continue to be involved as puppeteers. HOBT is beginning a new community initiative focusing on toxicity reduction and water quality protection, including performance art, community festivals and puppet shows.

- **Hmong American Partnership HAP** has continued taking adult English language learners to the resource recovery facility in Newport to raise awareness about waste issues among new students. They also created an organic garden the summer after the grant ended and talked about the effects of pesticides on health. This project was the first to propose integrating waste messages into the language curriculum of new residents, an idea that has been replicated since.

- **League of Women Voters (LWV):** LWV developed the “Bee Safe” educational campaign on household hazardous waste reduction and safety. The intern who facilitated the program moved on to another job, and LWV volunteers have not continued the program due to lack of funds for a new intern. However, the volunteers who were trained by Anoka County staff continue to informally share information with others about alternative cleaning products and proper HHW disposal sites in Anoka County. The LWV gave Amy Altman and Carolyn Smith, Anoka County Environmental Staff, the “Friend of the League” award for their help with the Bee Safe campaign.

- **Neighbors Inc.** In order to complete their project, the staff at Neighbors received a lot of training and new information that they continue to use. Some staff continue to share information on junk mail and HHW disposal with new volunteers who can, in turn, share it with elderly and low-income clients. Neighbors continues to distribute junk mail reduction information at their front desk, and this information is still of interest to clients who walk in to the office. About 50 cards have been distributed since the grant ended, and another 100 people have been reached with waste reduction messages. Staff do report, however, that since many of their clients are low-income, more immediate needs such as food, housing, and clothing tend to dominate their interests. Looking back, they would have structured the project differently given this constraint.

- **People Responding in Social Ministry (PRISM):** PRISM has continued pieces of their waste reduction program. They offer “no-waste holidays” information at their annual Holiday Shop

for their clients, and offer waste reduction links and information on their website. Waste reduction has become a larger priority for the organization, as they have begun purchasing less toxic cleaning products. PRISM staff did a presentation for 12 Hennepin County Social Service organization staff on their Community POWER project, encouraging others to adopt some of their outreach efforts around waste reduction.

- **St. Anthony Park Block Nurse Program.** The block nurse program has continued many of their grant-funded activities, and received a \$1,000 grant from a neighborhood organization to do so. They still include junk mail postcards in the packet they give to new clients, they continue to help organize garage sales on request, and continue to exchange digital thermometers. They still encourage re-use and using non-toxic products when cleaning seniors' homes.

"Compared with other grant programs, the Community POWER application process was very accessible and easy to use." -SAPBNP Director

- **Southern Valley Alliance for Battered Women (SVABW):** SVABW staff and support group members created a junk mail tree, which continues to be housed at Carver County Environmental Services offices. SVABW support group facilitators have waste reduction information and junk mail postcards available at support group meetings, however few members ask for the information. Waste reduction did become a larger priority for the organization, as it forced them to look at how they manage paper waste in their office.

Individual Grantee Summaries (Round 2)

- **African Refugee Support Services:** Halima Ibrahim, project manager, has fully embraced the importance of sharing waste education messages with Somali women. She integrates the training she received through Community POWER into all her presentations to the Somali community. For example, in June 2004, she facilitated a four-hour training for 15 Somali women on waste reduction and recycling. She also staffs a booth on waste reduction at Somali community festivals. Halima looks for opportunities to educate people on waste issues. She was asked to talk about welfare reform on a Somali TV program, and she integrated waste reduction messages into her talk. Halima has personally reached over 200 people with waste reduction messages since the grant ended through presentations and door-to-door work.

Because of this grant, African Refugee Support Services staff began double sided copying, started office recycling, and reduced the amount of hazardous household products in their homes by purchasing alternatives. Halima would like to get additional funding to create waste reduction posters/illustrations for non-English speakers, to provide more trainings, and to offer a "hotline" that Somali people could call with waste reduction questions. Halima continues to participate in Community POWER quarterly meetings and says the email contact "helps keep contact alive past the grant period."

"This is a very important program for our community. It is a real resource that will continue." -Halima Ibrahim

- **Hale Page Diamond Lake Neighborhood Association (HPDL):** HPDL continues to staff a waste reduction and education booth at their annual summer festival. They distribute and collect junk mail postcards, answer questions, and offer resources on a variety of waste education topics. They estimate that they have reached over 300 people through their booth at the fair, and another 4,400 through their neighborhood newsletter. HPDL is in the process of planning for Phase II of their Neighborhood Plan, and reducing waste is a priority in the plan.

One of their challenges is finding volunteers who are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about waste issues. The most useful components of Community POWER were the quarterly meetings and resources from Hennepin County. Linden Hills Neighborhood Council modeled their project after the work that HPDL did.

"Waste reduction has always been a priority for our organization. Community POWER gave us an avenue to educate others." -HPDL staff

- **Holland Neighborhood Association:** The farmers market is still active and attracting new residents and vendors. However, there has been significant staff and volunteer turnover, so the waste education activities have not continued. People who go to the market were very interested in waste issues, and wanted follow-up to take place at the market this year. But because of staffing and volunteer shortages it did not happen. People continue to use the canvas bags with the Community POWER and market logos.

Community POWER did influence how Holland Neighborhood Association manages its internal waste. Staff started double-sided copying, doing office recycling, and using less-toxic cleaning products. They also promoted the Hennepin County compost bin distribution. The grantee meetings, technical support from Hennepin County and resource materials were very valuable to Holland Neighborhood Association in completing their grant objectives.

- **Little Earth Resident's Association:** Little Earth hired a consultant to run their project, and the consultant did not stay involved beyond the grant period. There was little follow-up after the grant period ended to find out what impact the youth had on waste reduction at Little Earth. Permanent staff were not involved in executing the project, so they do not know if the youth that did the workshops for residents have continued their education efforts. The Little Earth Staff representative did say that while waste reduction is of concern to Little Earth, there are many other more pressing issues for the residents that get more attention (see recommendations section above for ideas on grantee use of outside consultants.)

The actual project was successful, as noted in their final report. It could easily be replicated by other groups. Unfortunately, Little Earth is not promoting it.

- **Longfellow Community Council:** LCC continues to offer their waste reduction packet to interested residents. It was advertised in the Longfellow newspaper, and they continue to receive requests for the alternative products handout. They also continue to offer workshops to residents on a variety of environmental topics, including buckthorn removal, composting, alternative landscaping, and rainbarrels. Local businesses continue to offer environmentally friendly products because of the success of the coupon program.

Because of Community POWER, staff now take home all recyclables. Residents want LCC to continue their waste reduction efforts, but LCC is short on staff and funding. LCC would like to get funding to replicate the We Compact program that Seward did a few years ago. LCC staff said the most useful part of Community POWER was the grantee meetings and technical support from staff.

- **Macalester-Groveland Community Council:** Mac-Groveland created a local waste reduction guidebook, which has been updated with funding from the City of St. Paul. They continue to distribute the guidebook at community events and distribution outlets. People who attended the workshops requested more training in the future, so the Environmental Committee offered an organic lawn care workshop in June. Rachel, the grant manager, has used our progress report format and meeting format with other projects she coordinates.

Rachel would like to offer more workshops, but lack of adequate staffing has been a barrier. People were very receptive to the hands-on approach of the workshops. The grantee meetings were particularly useful for Rachel, as was networking with other grantees to share ideas and resources. Rachel has given updates on her project to other recycling managers in Ramsey County and through RAM.

- **Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council:** The Council continues to offer regular swap days at four highrises, and give-away tables at ten highrises, where residents can exchange things they no longer need instead of putting them in the dumpster. They also continue to educate residents about how to get off junk mail lists, and the junk mail signs (in English and Somali) are visible in the Social Service offices. While recycling was not a part of this grant, they have started a recycling program with BFI picking up paper, glass, plastic, newspaper, etc. This has resulted in a reduction of the waste hauled away.

Staff have shared information about their project with several social service organizations and the housing authority. They felt that the networking with other grantees and technical support from staff were the most valuable parts of Community POWER.

- **Southwest YMCA:** Southwest YMCA, in cooperation with Eagan High School, developed a native habitat at the Eagan Eco-Site. They continue to create signage and offer tours to residents. Students continue to do ongoing maintenance of the site, along with outreach to the public. They plan to expand the acreage through funding from other donors, and hope to involve new students each year. This past spring they held a grand opening for the site, where students gave tours to the public. An average of eight students have been working on the project since it began, with an additional 25 students involved on planting days.

Irondale High School in Moundsview did a similar project through EarthService Corps after learning about SW YMCA's Community POWER project. The main barrier SW YMCA has faced is trying to keep the students interested and engaged from semester to semester. They are constantly recruiting new students along with trying to keep current students involved. The most valuable part of Community POWER was the quarterly meetings and support from county staff.

- **Youth Farm and Market:** Youth Farm and Market continues to use the 10-week waste reduction curriculum with their summer camps. One of the key staff participated in workshops on composting to increase their knowledge and ability to incorporate it into their curriculum. Waste reduction also became a higher priority for Youth Farm and Market. It forced them to become more proactive in how they dealt with waste at the gardens and during the camps. The campers became very aware of the benefits of composting and would "police" each other and the staff if they saw someone throwing something away that could be composted.

They are still composting all lunch waste generated through the camps, and use the compost in their raised beds. In addition, youth from a neighborhood mentoring program bring the younger kids to the farm site and teach them about composting. Over 200 youth have been actively engaged in waste reduction activities since the grant ended.

The biggest barrier they face is lack of time and money to get new staff trained in waste issues. They found the grantee meetings helpful for getting staff involved and educated, and the amount of staff time the grant funding supported was substantial for their organization.

Individual Grantee Summaries (Round 1)

- **Alliance for Sustainability:** The Alliance receives monthly calls from community groups wanting to get a Junk Mail Tree Kit. They hired an intern to organize supplies for the skeleton "trees" to make it easier for groups to do the project. The Junk Mail Tree Kit is advertised on their website, through their flyers and newsletters, and OEA's Reduce.org website. Natural Step presentations to churches and community groups continue to include information about waste reduction. The Alliance created a network of businesses called "Marketing Minds" to discuss strategies for getting the advertising field to be less junk mail oriented.

They have incorporated the Junk Mail Tree project into larger projects and grants. They will continue to have it on display at events. At the Living Green Expo, 800 people turned in "commitment cards" indicating how they planned to reduce waste. Staff then follow-up with these people to find out how successful they were at changing behaviors.

- **ArtStart:** The grant helped ArtStart refocus their goals and mission toward waste reduction. They rewrote their mission statement to include waste education. The Program Director even replaced the store manager after realizing the person was not a good "fit" for her new vision of the organization. Since the grant period ended, they continue to weigh all reuse materials that come in and out of the store; display waste education posters and flyers in the store; and incorporate waste reduction into youth programs, Scrapmobile neighborhood visits, and teacher workshops. They retrained birthday party facilitators to include waste education in their party activities. They redirect people donating products they cannot accept to other organizations that will take the items instead of just throwing them away.

One barrier ArtStart mentioned is getting people to think of ArtScraps first when they need something, instead of going to the Dollar Store or Target. Most people go to ArtScraps as a last resort, and the organization is trying to change that mindset to "buy used first." Staff, store visitors, class participants, and neighbors continue to be interested in waste reduction and request further information. They shared information about Community POWER with the East Side Arts Council and Council Del Pueblo in St. Paul. The most useful parts of Community POWER for them, in addition to staff support and quarterly meetings, were clear expectations from staff and the partnerships they developed with other grantees.

"Community POWER...the people and programs.....there was such great synergy!" -ArtStart staff

- **Center for Neighborhoods:** The Center for Neighborhoods sees itself as a clearinghouse of information and resources for neighborhood organizations. They added waste education and resources to their website as part of what they offer. The website is utilized often by neighborhood groups. They are working with the Alliance for Sustainability and several other organizations to hold a second Neighborhood Sustainability Conference (spring 2004). They are looking for help in planning the waste reduction track for the conference, and help getting elected officials to participate. Funding is tight at the local neighborhood level as NRP funding

is being cut back, so community organizations are scaling back operations. Many may need funding in order to continue or begin waste reduction projects. Information about Community POWER funding was made available at the conference.

- **Great River Earth Institute:** The Voluntary Simplicity curriculum is complete and available for community groups to utilize. Parts of it would need to be adapted for counties other than Anoka. Anoka County staff have indicated an interest in continuing the program and have all the materials. Recruiting groups to do the program can be difficult, but once they are on board it really worked well. In order to continue promoting and facilitating the program, GREI would need funding for staff or an intern. They had good luck with “Mom's groups,” that had not received waste reduction messages before. A meeting was held with people who participated in the program, and all indicated an interest in seeing the program continue in Anoka County. They felt very supported by county and Community POWER staff as they went through the project, but would have like more help learning how to recruit participants.

- **Harvest Moon:** A waste reduction curriculum complete with lesson plans was created and implemented with their youth camps. They are continuing to utilize the most popular lesson plans with the camps, but have had to limit how many can be done as they do not have enough funding for all the supplies. They would have preferred more funding over a longer period of time to get established and become less grant dependent. They would like to do more with waste reduction, and have been hearing from campers and their parents that they really liked the lessons. They would like to have been able to re-apply for new funding, but could not because of the "no curriculum development" limitation in the current grant guidelines.

"Kids change so much from year to year. We could have reached them differently if sustained funding was possible... Thank you so much! It (Community POWER) made a huge difference in what we did last year and this year with kids. Families and kids were all excited!" -Harvest Moon staff

- **New Earth Partnership:** The information and training packet they developed can be used by anyone (without training) to offer an adult forum on waste education, or a composting workshop. When NEP approaches new congregations about their efforts, providing the waste reduction curriculum is part of the services they offer. NEP is seeking funding to do outreach to new churches, however they currently have no paid staff. While the curriculum that was developed is highly replicable, NEP is seeking staff capacity to complete all of their initiatives.

NEP staff commented that this was the only grant program in which they have participated where so much additional support was available, outside of the funding.

"You clearly wanted our project to succeed." -NEP leadership

- **Nokomis Healthy Seniors:** Staff considered asking Hennepin County staff come back to do another health promotion workshop for seniors, but have not made such a request because their focus this year is on housing issues. Participants in the last presentation they did on waste reduction requested future presentations on the topic. The organization made permanent changes in how they run their office and meetings, including getting real nametags and mugs.

There are several low- or no-cost things they can do to continue promoting waste reduction, including putting the junk mail postcards in their newsletter. They could also get information on waste reduction to their volunteers (150 people). Barriers they have faced to continuing the

program are funding, and that waste reduction is not core to their mission. They never intended for this to continue at the same level indefinitely. They feel their project is easily replicable by other Block Nurse programs and promoted Community POWER to them. They were especially happy with the help they received from Hennepin County staff. They were the only group that felt that not all of the content provided through the quarterly meetings applied to them. They felt they got most of the information they needed from Hennepin County staff. They would have liked more information on how to do publicity. They appreciated the unique opportunity to present at the RAM/SWANA conference.

"The people who were reached through this project would never have been reached with waste reduction messages any other way." -NHS staff

- **Seward Neighborhood Group:** The “We Compost” program was adopted by other neighborhoods, including Standish-Ericsson, East Phillips, Powderhorn and Corcoran neighborhoods. The grant contributed to a strong existing mechanism -- the SNG environment committee. This project facilitated their mission and moved waste reduction into the forefront of their agenda. Unfortunately, SNG lost their staffing for the environment committee, and funding is needed to replace him. Residents continue to call SNG for information on composting as the signs are still up in people's yards.