

Sustainable Tompkins Recognizes Local “*Signs of Sustainability*” for 2007

On December 7th, at its annual holiday party, the board of directors of Sustainable Tompkins recognized some of our region’s brightest “*Signs of Sustainability*” for 2007. For anyone not included on this list, please understand that we know full well that this list is not all-inclusive - there are so many worthy contributors to greater regional sustainability in our area. If anyone has been inadvertently overlooked, it is not because your efforts were not deemed worthy. It is much more a matter that there is so much great work popping up in this region coupled with our lack of a formal mechanism to identify, track and collect these innovations throughout the year. For 2008, we will work to establish an open community nomination process with evaluation criteria.

Meantime, these **new sustainability-related organizations** drew our attention this year:

- **Connect Ithaca**, represented by Jake Roberts, Rob Morache, Joan Bokaer, Elizabeth Harrod, Frost Travis, and Elan Shapiro. This dynamic group formed this summer to promote sustainable forms of development, alternative transportation, and transit-oriented development. Connect Ithaca is actively working to bring Personal Rapid Transit to Ithaca in the very near future.
- **SewGreen**, the brainchild of Wendy Skinner. This new collective, which grew out of the highly successful ReImagine Style eco-fashion contest, is helping people learn how to express their creativity around fashion without burdening the planet. SewGreen is helping people learn new skills that will be important in a local economy.
- **Race Liberation Alliance**, represented by Liz Field, Liz Karabinakis, Jhakeem Houltom, and Caleb Thomas. This small but effective group has teamed up to help forge the connections between justice and sustainability, and to bridge the unnecessary gaps between races in our community. In 2007, they organized a wonderful and well-attended Summertime Block Party around the Greater Ithaca Activity Center (GIAC) with the theme of Justice and Sustainability.
- **Whole Community Project** of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, represented by Shira Adriance and Judy Hoffman. Systems thinking is critical to finding our path to greater sustainability, and the good folks at CCE are making critical contributions to helping us solve complex problems at the systems level. The Whole Community Project hopes to help address the issue of childhood obesity, but they are doing this by linking up and supporting all the many people and programs that interact to influence the food habits and physical activity levels of young people.
- **Compos Mentis**, represented by Shannon Haskins. This new organization opened its doors last spring near the Cayuga Nature Center, making the connection between supporting good mental health by helping people connect to nature and to the rhythms and responsibilities of gardening and caring for animals.
- **Ithaca South Hill Industrial Pollution (*Ithaca-SHIP*)** group, represented by Regina and Ken Deschere. This citizens group organized to share information about the toxic contamination in the South Hill neighborhoods from TCE used in industrial processes in nearby manufacturing plants.
- **Cornell Center for a Sustainable Future**, represented by Frank DiSalvo and Dan Roth. We are all glad to see Cornell University taking a variety of steps to become more sustainable, and to help provide leadership locally, nationally, and across the globe. We hope the new Center will take advantage of the work we could do together here in the Finger Lakes Region.
- **Shopping Bag Action Group (S-BAG)**, represented by Tom Shelley. S-BAG is another new citizens group that is educating and advocating on a particular topic – in this case the use of plastic shopping bags – but using that particular consumption issue to raise consciousness about our patterns of living.

- **Climate Change Action Group**, represented by Sigrid Kulkowitz, Sylvester Johnson, Jeanne Fudala, and Margaret McCasland. Last winter, this group was spurred into action by Sigrid because of her concern over the oncoming impacts of global warming. They have been very busy with many educational efforts: library exhibits, tabling at events, and making presentations at venues across the region.
- **Teachers for a Sustainable Future**, represented by Dan Flerlage and Tina Nilsen-Hodges. This group, which grew out of a study circle process of Sustainable Tompkins, helps each other develop curriculum that teaches other faculty, students and their families about living and working more sustainably.
- **Cayuga Sustainability Council**, represented by Gay Nicholson, Dale Bryner, Jon Bosak, and Bethany Schroeder. At a June meeting for the local sustainability movement organized by Sustainable Tompkins, ST was asked to help the movement stay connected. These four individuals worked to set up the first quarterly meeting of the Cayuga Sustainability Council, which will provide a venue for briefing other groups on current programming, and may also evolve to working with systems thinking tools to get the most impact from our work together.

These **new sustainable enterprises** that opened for business in our community in 2007:

- **E2E Materials** and **Comet Skateboards**, owned and operated by Pat Govang and Jason Salfi. This exciting new business has big implications for the future of green jobs in Ithaca. Using new “green” polymer technology developed at Cornell, E2E plans to make all sorts of non-toxic products out of plant-based materials. Comet Skateboards has relocated from California to Ithaca to be the first company to take advantage of this new clean and green tech.
- **Green P.R. Services** (GPRS – pronounced “Jeepers”), started by Wendy Skinner, one of the most versatile social entrepreneurs in our movement. This year, she made the leap to offering her considerable marketing and communications skills to the many new sustainability-related businesses and organizations in our community. It is great to be able to get professional help from someone who really knows the values and issues in the sustainability field.
- **Home Green Home**, owned and operated by Joe Nolan and Becca Rodomsky. It’s critical that we make sure we are providing the infrastructure for sustainable living right here in our community. The new HGH store on the Commons is a showcase of healthy, nontoxic products for the home that have been selected for their low impact on the planet as well. Best of all, many of their items are made locally and help support good jobs in our community. In addition, HGH opens its store to host educational programming about sustainability topics for the community.
- **Tuff Soul**, owned and operated by Autumn Newell and Ishka Alpern. Another new green business in the retail sector is part of the renaissance happening down on State Street. Tuff Soul is all about sustainable fashion, offering vintage items along with new clothing made from organic fabrics. We also want to acknowledge the impact Autumn and Ishka are having from the beautiful remodeling of their building using many salvaged materials; they are really walking their talk at Tuff Soul!
- **Retail Training Center** (RTC) operated by the Women’s Opportunity Center, started by Dammi Herath, Linda Johanson and the whole RTC management team. This new non-profit clothing boutique not only provides an attractive retail outlet for second-hand clothing, but also trains women in how to work in retail, providing them with job skills that will help them qualify for better paying jobs.
- **Second Time Around**, fashion consignment store, run by store manager Beth Lynch. This is another node in the cluster around sustainable fashion.
- **Diaper Duty**, run by Jesse Hill. We were all glad to learn about Jesse’s cloth diaper service coming to Ithaca. The problems around both waste and toxicity associated with plastic diapers are quite

alarming when you learn the details. But many parents don't think they can take on doing their own diapers – thanks to Jesse they can do the right thing by the planet and their baby!

- **Ceres Garden** on Route 96B above Ithaca College. This new farm stand provides fresh farm produce during the summer months to residents of the South Hill community.

These **new sustainability programs** were begun this year:

- **Mayor Carolyn Peterson and the City of Ithaca invited community stakeholders to participate on the Local Action Plan Steering Committee** and consult to city leaders on their implementation of the Mayors Climate Commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from city operations.
- **Monika Roth, Helen Hebben and their team at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County for the Low-Income Community-Supported Agriculture Program (CSA)** providing access to locally-grown farm produce for low-income communities.
- **Jan Norman and all the fine folks at the Ithaca Farmers Market** for integrating 'zero waste' collections of food scrap and compostable serviceware.
- **Hoyt and Rebecca Benjamin and Randy Lawrence from B&W Restaurant Supply** for incorporating Greenware compostable serviceware products in their offerings, supporting the product needs of many of the food vendors at the Ithaca Farmers Market.
- **Jim Procter and Mark Wittig from Cayuga Compost** for scaling up to handle the community's growing compost processing requirements. Not only is Cayuga Compost handling the new compostable waste stream from the Farmers Market, but they have also taken on ALL the dining hall food waste composting for Ithaca College, enabling IC to both expand its composting program and close down its campus composting facility.
- **Michael Smith and the team in the Produce Department at Ithaca Wegmans** for the startling increase in organic products being offered, and their great promotional signage as you walk in the store that lists the number of organic offerings available in the produce section.
- **Stu Stein and Barbara Blanchard from MEGA**, the Municipal Electric and Gas Alliance, for their support of the **Holiday Lights Grant Program** which purchased many strings of highly energy-efficient LED lights for the outdoor decorations on the Commons.
- **General Manager Joe Turcotte and Operations Manager Nancy Oltz from Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit** for integrating hybrid diesel buses into the fleet of TCAT buses.
- **Jon Raimon, Megan Wood, Ian Gray, Jamie Hoffman, and Sam Koplinka –Loehr, students at Lehman Alternative Community School**, for obtaining a used Ithaca City School District short bus and converting it to run on "veggie fuel". The bus is used to support the exchange of ideas and people between LACS and the Freedom School on the Akwesasne Reservation.
- **Beth Ellen Clark Joseph, Nancy Jacobson, and the organizing team behind the Tompkins Renewable Energy Education Alliance's** first Community Forum on Energy, which was held in November at Ithaca College, attracting over 200 attendees eager to learn about the broad range of renewable energy technologies.
- **Havana Jorrin-Peters and Jan Quarles for the Energy Efficiency Community Outreach Program**, which provides in-home training on energy efficiency techniques in a study circle format. EECO is a project of Sustainable Tompkins.
- **Steve Siconolfi, dean of the School of Health Sciences and Human Performance at Ithaca College**, for his support for the development and hosting of the Health and Sustainability Conference on the campus in September.
- **Jim Graney and Jay Wrolsted from "Tompkins Weekly"** for offering support for the regular "Signs of Sustainability" column in the paper.

- **Andrew Bernier for the “Your Impact” radio show** on (91.7 FM) WICB, which seeks to provide information on the decisions you make and the efforts of a sustainably conscious community.
- **Rob Ross, Elizabeth Humbert, and Billy Kepner from the Museum of the Earth for their new Climate Change exhibit** and for their support of sustainability-themed educational programming.
- **Charlie Trautmann and the good folks at the Sciencenter for their new sustainability initiative**, announced earlier this year, which will inform the Center’s educational programming for the future.
- **GreenStar Cooperative Market for establishing their new affiliate program, GreenStar Community Projects Inc.**, to aid in the co-op's mission to initiate and support community projects that promote cooperatives, healthful living, local self-reliance, self-sufficiency, community, ecological sustainability and social justice. The non-profit will enhance GreenStar's ability to leverage consumer dollars to build a healthy, vibrant community by reinvesting profits of the co-op back into the community.
- **The Lab of Ornithology’s “Celebrate Urban Birds” project**, a national project to encourage participation in activities focused on birds and neighborhood habitat improvement. The 2007 Celebration theme centered on urban greening for birds through container plantings, community gardens, community beautification projects, and green rooftops.
- **Caitlin Baxter and her entire 5th grade class at Enfield Elementary School for their design of school-wide composting and recycling systems** that are student-run and which have greatly reduced the waste generated at their school.
- **Bob Walters, Dave Buchner and the members of the 06-07 After-School technology club** who helped to design and construct a beautiful 2-bin composting unit, composed of local black locust, which completely meets the new ICSD composting guidelines. The Technology Club donated the unit to Enfield School for their school-wide composting system.
- **Emily Dowd, a senior at Lehman Alternative Community School, for developing her “green power” project**, in which Emily researched the background and crafted an appeal to get LACS leadership to commit to purchasing renewable energy.
- **Alexis Suskin-Sperry, a graduate of LACS, for the “Green Light” program.** This innovative program - which Alexis designed to be replicated by other schools - involved finding an inexpensive source for high quality compact fluorescent bulbs, and offering them to families through her school at a reduced and sliding cost scale. Through this program, Alexis distributed over 1,000 bulbs last spring.
- **Janie Clark and her students at Caroline Elementary School** for their “*Living More Sustainably – Why and How?*” theme for this year’s school fundraising calendar. This calendar provides useful information on a wide variety of sustainability topics, including natural resources, energy use, waste management, composting, alternative energy, recycling, green building, healthy food choices, litterless lunches, and smart consumer choices. All proceeds of the sale of these calendars are donated to charity.

~contributed by Gay Nicholson and Marian Brown, Sustainable Tompkins