

## Greening Your Office

Even before Linda Horsch attended the Live Green in Plano Volunteer Training, she had started an office Green Team at work. You'll be inspired by her story.

### **How did the Green Team at your office begin?**

Our official team was formed late in 2008 with our agency's mandate to "go green". In 2009 our Central Office in Baltimore issued a CMS Goes Green newsletter encouraging everyone to participate in April's Earth Day Celebration.

I was already collecting recycling and urging coworkers to turn off lights and other electronics each day, so I guess I was the logical one to ask to form a team with a green focus. I asked several other coworkers I knew who were into recycling and our team grew from there.

Our first project was co-sponsoring the Earth Day Celebration, along with the Social Security Administration and other Federal agencies in our building. Each year since then, the Earth Day Celebration has gotten bigger and better.

Of course, it also helped that the go green mandate is now in my manager's and her manager's annual performance appraisal. It also helps that my manager is a proponent of going green.

### **Explain how the Green Team functions and how many employees are impacted.**

Our green team consists of seven members. Most joined of their own free will, and one was drafted because of her excellent computer skills. Our division of thirty-five staff realizes the direct impact, but we share information with our entire office of approximately 160.

Because of our heavy workload, we don't meet often enough, but when we do it's usually two-fold: brainstorming new ideas or projects and how to improve what we already have going.

We each have the responsibility of collecting recycling from the two bins we have placed in our building cafeteria, around our office and in our break rooms. We try to send out weekly Friday tips, on recycling, energy or water conservation, radon detection, rebates from the city, or what UV rays to expect when you go to the beach. We keep messages brief and interesting. We also make announcements and periodically show a short video during weekly staff meetings.

### **Describe your top three, most successful projects.**

Paper reduction is a big accomplishment and we continue to redefine our goal and improve upon our success. We encourage double-sided printing, reusing single-sided paper for in-house use, NOT printing if not necessary, and the use of Internet manuals instead of printing huge binders of manuals for everyone to have at their desks.

We are encouraging and have increased the number of staff who power down at the end of the day and especially at the end of the week. We occasionally roam the office at the end of the day to see what has been left on. At first we used "green" citations (printed on green paper) telling staff they were being cited for having left a printer or light on, etc. We have gone to a more friendly approach and now leave a smiley-face note saying "we turned off your printer, your overhead light", and such. It is a fine line that we walk as not to be intrusive to others, so we have to "tread lightly".

Our biggest success is changing perceptions about recycling. We see that our recycling projects in our office are carrying over and becoming a habit in personal lives. Now we hear people talking about having as much or more recycling than trash and encouraging their kids and grandkids to recycle!

### **What advice do you have for others who would like to form a green team at their office?**

There always has to be a champion. I was that person in my office. You can be the champion in your office. If you are passionate about something and persevere, it will usually happen. Don't get discouraged! Find like-minded people who share the same values and start there. Most of our green team members were environmentally conscious and just needed group encouragement to put their actions where their hearts were. Again, it helps to have management encouragement and backing when attempting to bring more people into the fold.