



GET ENERGIZED IOWA!

Where Communities Compete to Conserve

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CONTACTS: David Osterberg or Mike Owen, Iowa Policy Project, (319) 338-0773, ipp@lcom.net

Carole Yates, UNI Center for Energy and Environmental Education, (319) 273-7599, carole.yates@uni.edu

Wapsie Valley wins energy competition in NE Iowa

CEDAR FALLS, Iowa — Simple ideas and common sense translated into big energy savings for residents of Readlyn and Fairbank as the two Northeast Iowa towns' energy-reduction efforts earned their school a new solar system.

Organizers of the Get Energized, Iowa! competition among four communities today announced Wapsie Valley — the combined team of Readlyn and Fairbank — as the winner for reducing the most electricity use in 2012. The Wapsie teams combined to see a 6.4 percent reduction in electricity in 2012 from the annual average of 2010 and 2011. That compared with a reduction of 5.1 percent in Hudson and 3.1 percent in Dike. By itself, Readlyn reduced the most electricity used with a 12 percent reduction in 2012 over the baseline 2010-2011 period.

In the points system used to score the competition (see box), Wapsie Valley won with 2,242 points, just ahead of the 2,133 for Dike and 1,226 for Hudson.

All of the communities showed significant savings, said David Osterberg, executive director of the Iowa Policy Project (IPP), which sponsored the friendly challenge along with the University of Northern Iowa Center for Energy and Environmental Education (CEEE).

Other partners included the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities, Green Iowa AmeriCorps, Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative, and the municipal utilities and community groups in each town.

"As we said all along, this isn't just an academic exercise, and the efforts in these communities can show other communities how it's done," Osterberg said.

"While this exercise showed how community leadership and friendly competition can make a difference to achieve smarter use of energy, one of the lessons can be that public policy could have this kind of impact as well."

Guide teams led the effort in each community. The Readlyn Community Club served that role in Readlyn, and was instrumental in incorporating Get Energized into many community events.

Louie Hartman, club president during 2012, said some of the efforts through the year became habits, and that residents will keep doing them.

Scoring system

Points in the Get Energized, Iowa! competition were awarded for 10 categories: surveys filled out, CFLs given away, weatherizations done, participation in the Green Bike Tour, 25 steps under \$25, plans of action developed, items of plans of action achieved, 1 percent communitywide reduction of energy, and 1 percent per resident household energy reduction.

Points were adjusted due to the differences in number of meters and residents of the four towns. Final electric reductions also took the weather into account.

The towns battled for points for a year with Dike and Wapsie Valley remaining neck and neck for the points until the final reduction numbers for community and resident household energy pushed Wapsie Valley over the top.

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“Two of the easiest were switching lights off and putting in CFLs (compact florescent light bulbs) — and being more conscious of running the dishwasher when it was full,” Hartman said.

Hartman enjoyed seeing seniors in older homes get involved, taking advantage of weatherization audits and follow-up weatherizations by Green Iowa AmeriCorps workers.

Another benefit was that Readlyn and Fairbank worked together with a favorable outcome, which Hartman called “good for both communities.”

Readlyn City Clerk Lois Buhr said in her own home, changes including trying during summer to keep drapes pulled when it was sunny, and changing out light bulbs to CFLs, as well as altering laundry habits — hanging clothes out to dry, and running the washer and dryer late at night rather than at peak load times.

She said the competition was good because people like to compete and it “makes you actually take the steps.”

“I think these changes will stay with me especially with the cost of electricity going up,” she said.

Fairbank City Clerk Marlene Streppe said she saw the benefit of more weatherization — caulking and weather stripping — both with comfort (“not as drafty”) and in the pocketbook, as she “saw some difference in the electric bill.”

Officials in the other competing communities also shared energy-saving tips. Sue Theisen, utility administrator in Hudson, said she lowered the temperature on her water heater, waited for a full load before washing clothes or dishes, and used all cold water for washing clothes.

Dike Mayor Mike Soppe said he changed his programmable thermostat to lower heat and raise air-conditioning temperatures and installed more CFLs.

| | Dike | Wapsie | Hudson |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Surveys filled out (pre & post) | 184 | 330 | 120 |
| CFLs given away | 36 | 613 | 386 |
| AmeriCorps audit | 29 | 72 | 21 |
| Weatherizations done | 9 | 36 | 1 |
| 25 Steps under \$25 returned | 38 | 60 | 44 |
| Plans of Action developed | 23 | 35 | 42 |
| Items on Plan of action achieved | 132 | 102 | 60 |
| 1% community wide reduction | 25 | 32 | 15 |
| 1% per residence kWh reduction in 2012 | 134 | 585 | |
| Green Bike Tour participants | 6 | 38 | 6 |
| Scores | 2133 | 2242 | 1226 |

Both Soppe and Theisen said they would keep up with the new energy-saving techniques.

“We’re used to it after this year and I don’t know why we wouldn’t stick with it,” Soppe said.

The Get Energized competition earned a public face in the towns, with promotions including giveaways of CFLs and Get Energized displays and parade entries.

“The strategies we used to help people know how to reduce energy encouraged people to make changes in their lives, to help their household budgets immediately and also help the environment for the long term,” said Carole Yates, community organizer at CEEE.

“We are hopeful that we will see the dividends of this effort for years to come, in these communities and in others as well,” Yates said.