

Learning and Leading Together

“Help educate the public, schools, other jurisdictions, professional associations, business and industry about reducing global warming pollution.” Action item #12 in the Mayors’ Climate Protection Agreement

*“Cities can set a leadership example in initiating programs which will reduce global warming. Education is the key and cities can lead and educate by example.”
- Mayor Mark Stodola, Little Rock, AR*

Humans are remarkably good at pulling themselves together and coming up with solutions when they really must. None of us are truly experts in this rapidly evolving response to climate change, so we need to be learning together as quickly as we can, and sharing what we’ve learned as we go. If we share our learning, we’ll help to ensure that as many as possible can take action as they are able.

We are all pioneers in this one. Countries are debating methods of climate change mitigation and legislation at the global level. Nationally, cities are signing up for the Mayors’ Climate Protection Agreement, and then following up with public postings of their Climate Action Plans as they wrestle with how to decrease their carbon footprint in their specific locations. The U.S. Mayors Conference web page has a document of best climate protection practices from cities around the nation. There’s a similar document at the global level – it’s heart-warming to know that mayors from around the world are sharing their best ideas. It gives me hope that we’ll find solutions.

Businesses are following suit – in Seattle there’s a business Climate Action Partnership which includes such heavyweights as REI, Starbucks, the University of Washington, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center, the City and Port of Seattle, and others. They are joining forces to set their own carbon reduction goals, and spur one another on to meet those goals. They realize that the “triple bottom line” – good for the earth, good for people, good for profit – is a business model which will help them weather the changes that are coming.

Here in Ohio, businesses have a great resource in Entrepreneurs 4 Sustainability (e4s), a network of over 4000 NE Ohio business leaders who are working together to create a “sustainable economy” in our region. They hold regular meetings, and their website provides links to business connections, learning opportunities, and support for economic development projects in Northeastern Ohio.

Another local resource is the Green Energy Ohio website. This is a great place to start for information on alternative energy happenings in Ohio. Visit them for the latest on fuel cells, Ohio wind maps, solar vendors and installers, tax incentives, legislation, grants and more. You can view the live monitor of the energy being produced by solar panels on the Governors’ Carriage House, or by the wind turbine in Lake Erie (remember that both these technologies have high and low production times over the course of a year – so be sure to check out the data for the entire year). Need a program for your group? Contact their speaker’s bureau, and spread the

education. Green Energy Ohio also sponsors an annual “Solar Tour” in October, with tours occurring in most counties around NE Ohio. This is an opportunity to visit the local homes and businesses that have taken the solar (or wind) plunge; your class, club, church or business can sign up for an actual tour, or choose to view the virtual online version.

Faith organizations are helping congregations to walk the talk. A document called “Building a Firm Foundation: A Creation-Friendly Building Guide for Churches,” produced by the National Council of Churches USA, is available for download from their website, along with other resources on stewardship and creation care. The Evangelical Environmental Network & Creation Care Magazine also have a website with links to the “Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation,” and a global warming update section with an interview with Christian climate scientist Sir John Houghton. People of faith have a wonderful opportunity to educate their congregations, and to live out their faith with action.

Here in Alliance, the Mayor’s Green Task Force is working to set up a web page to provide information on the task force and its activities, including how businesses and individuals can be involved. Look for a link from the City’s web page later this year.

Spreading the word is essential. You or I may not have the resources right now to buy a hybrid, or to put up solar panels, but if we pass along the information on these items, maybe someone else will. If we all educate ourselves, and we share our successes and “best practices,” then hopefully each of us will be able to find some way we can take useful action, whether that’s a green building project, an equipment upgrade, recycling more, or simply changing a light bulb. It all counts.

“Each individual and every community has the ability to make a positive or negative impact on climate. The City of North Pole is committed to making a positive impact on climate and educating our residents on ways that they can participate in this process.”

- Mayor Jeffrey Jacobson, North Pole, AK

Check it Out:

RealClimate: an award-winning website of “climate science by working climate scientists.”

Links, by topic, to high-quality information sites. www.realclimate.org/

E4S: Entrepreneurs for Sustainability – a network of NE Ohio business leaders working toward “putting the principles of sustainability into action.” www.e4s.org/

Green Energy Ohio: Everything about renewable and alternative energy in Ohio. Wind and solar info, tax incentives and grants, downloadable “Ohio Renewable Energy Resource Guide,” www.greenenergyohio.org

National Council of Churches USA: “Building a Firm Foundation: A Creation-Friendly Building Guide for Churches,” www.nccecojustice.org/resources.html

Evangelical Environmental Network & Creation Care Magazine: interviews with climate scientists, educational resources, and more: <http://www.creationcare.org/>

U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Center: get a sense of what's possible for our own city in the "Best Practices Guide." See a copy of the Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement which our city council has endorsed: <http://usmayors.org/climateprotection/>

Next Green Task Force meeting: September 20th, 6:30 pm, at the West Room in the Hoover Price Campus Center at Mount Union.