



2011

Maryland Green Registry Leadership Award Winner



St. Mary's County Public Schools



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Green Schools

Work, Live and Learn for Tomorrow

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The Maryland Green Registry Leadership Awards recognize organizations that have shown a strong commitment to the implementation of sustainable practices, the demonstration of measurable results, and the continuous improvement of environmental performance. Read here how these award winners achieved their environmental successes and continue to move their organization forward along the path to sustainability.

What innovation or set of results are you most proud of?

We believe sustainability is a balance between our local ecology, our economy, and our social culture. In order to achieve sustainability, we focus on the changes that we can make to our infrastructure; and equally important, we also focus on the long-term changes that we need to make in our environmental habits. Through a comprehensive and integrated sustainability program that focuses on changing energy use and environmental awareness habits, as well as optimizing our facility performance, we are doing our part to reduce our impact on the environment, conserving our valuable resources, and



managing our operating budgets during challenging economic times. We are proud of the conservation efforts that we have achieved through our educational program in our schools, community outreach through our mobile classroom, and our integrated approach to the planning and operation of our facilities, allowing us to reduce our electric consumption by 8,487,560 kWh, for a cost savings of \$1,152,938 since FY 2007.

At George Washington Carver Elementary School, we are harnessing the power of the sun through one of five Project Sunburst grants from the Maryland Energy Administration for the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) generating systems. The system



will consist of 840 roof-mounted solar panels and 1,274 ground-mounted solar panels. Combined, the generating capacity of the solar PV system is 500 kW, which will produce an amount of electricity that is equivalent to 80% of the annual electrical consumption of the school. The system is to be installed and operated by a joint venture of Standard Solar Incorporated of Rockville, Maryland with Perpetual Energy Systems based in Los Angeles under a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). Over the 15 years of the PPA, SMCPSS is expected to save as much as \$1.4 million in energy costs. SMCPSS

intends to use the annual savings to fund renewable energy and energy conservation projects at other schools.

High performance schools are facilities that improve the learning environment while saving energy, resources, and money. Creating a high performance school is not difficult, but it requires an integrated, “whole building” approach. The school system is choosing to build high performance learning environments, which are teaching tools within themselves, instilling within each and every student and staff member a sense of involvement and com-



mitment to the maintenance and sustenance of our environment. Through our new construction and the modernization of our existing facilities, we are committed to design, build, operate, and maintain schools that provide highly productive learning environments, which are energy efficient.

Evergreen Elementary School, a LEED™ Gold certified school, was designed to serve as a showcase and ambassador for environmentally responsible design.

How do you involve employees in your environmental programs and projects and keep them motivated?

The Division of Supporting Services is comprised of seven departments: capital planning and green schools, design and construction, food and nutrition services, maintenance, operations, safety and security, and transportation. The motto for the division is “Integrated Vision in Action,” which serves as the basis for the philosophy of the sustainability program for the school system. The efforts of the division are coordinated through strategic planning, project coordination, environmental education, and community outreach. The benefit of this collabo-

ration can be truly seen in the community outreach activities in which we engage our entire staff to communicate and educate the community on our environmental and conservation programs at events such as the local Earth Day Celebration and the County Fair. A key component to the success of our program is the



collaboration between the teachers that serve as Green School Coordinators in our schools with the Division of Supporting Services staff. The bridge that is formed between instruction and construction ensures that we are inspiring and motivating our staff to be involved in energy conservation as active partners in the program. Collectively, we translate our technical expertise in facility and operational management into instructional best management practices that allow our students to become stewards of their environments. As a result of our collaboration, fourteen out of our twenty-seven schools have received Maryland Green School certification as of 2011, with a goal of all schools being certified by 2013.

What have been your biggest obstacles and how did you overcome them?

The biggest challenge that we have experienced with our sustainability program has been finding the balance between our fiscal responsibility and the environmental impact of some of the sustainable solutions that we needed to consider. A prime example is the utilization of Styrofoam trays in our school lunch program. Since the department of food and nutrition services' budget is self supporting, any cost increases that would be incurred to replace the Styrofoam trays with a more sustainable option would have to be passed on directly to the students. During these challenging economic times we need to address our environmental concerns, investigate cost effective solutions, and remain committed to providing quality programs for our students. The green team, comprised of the ap-

propriate staff, reviews the problem, completes research, and provides a comprehensive recommendation. A key element to this process is ensuring that the final recommendation, including the data analysis, is communicated to all of the stakeholders, ensuring that the process is transparent, especially if the final decision is not able to be as sustainable or green as desired.



What's the first step you would recommend that someone take when starting to green their organization?

The first step is to develop a green team that can evaluate and benchmark your energy performance. At the same time you can establish your goals and priorities for your sustainability program. A charette (brainstorming)

process, comprised of all of the stakeholders, can be an efficient means to achieve a listing of goals and objectives that will be the basis of the strategic plan for the green program. Once you have an organized plan in place, that includes a schedule for implementation, it will allow you to start building support for the program. Ensuring that management leads by example, developing a strong communication and marketing plan, and developing a comprehensive educational outreach program are essential elements to a successful program.

For more information on environmental best practices at St. Mary's Public Schools, visit the Maryland Green Registry website at www.green.maryland.gov/registry and click on List of Maryland Green Registry Members to view member profiles.

The Maryland Green Registry is a voluntary program that promotes and recognizes environmentally sustainable practices in organizations of all types and sizes across the State. Visit the Maryland Green Registry website at www.green.maryland.gov/registry for tips and resources designed to help organizations set and meet their own goals on the path to sustainability.

