

Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light Green Needham Collaborative



Green Needham Collaborative is a community-based group bringing together people and organizations within the town of Needham to build a more sustainable community through collaborative efforts on energy and the environment. Its objective is to create and sustain local projects, education, and action to reduce the use of fossil fuels, to save money on energy, to promote innovation in energy conservation and production and use of renewable energy, and to offer collaborative and educational opportunities for Olin College and Needham K-12 students.

Green Needham's focus on collaboration among residents, municipal departments, schools, colleges and businesses is a key element of its success. In kicking off its **10% Energy Challenge** in January, Green Needham targeted having 100 households sign up by Earth Day in April to reduce their household energy consumption by at least 10%. Having community organizations and houses of worship recruit their members to participate drove the program to reach over 200 households by April 22nd. That day, Earth Day, Green Needham kicked off a schools-based campaign, where groups in six Needham schools recruited families to participate. By the end of June, over 450 households had taken the 10% Challenge.



Green Needham helps to reduce potential duplication of environmental programs by helping interested parties find and join existing efforts. If an idea or program does not yet exist in Needham, the collaborative will help get it started. It was at a Green Needham meeting that residents, high school science teachers and Needham Town staff discovered a shared interest in exploring the use of wind power in Needham. A Green Needham working group has galvanized community interest and support, raised funds, and researched and developed a plan now being executed with the Town to install a meteorological tower. This installation will provide the data to evaluate the feasibility of wind power and be integrated into the curriculum at the High School while serving as a very visible demonstration of the community's determination to sustainability.

Green Needham is also aiming to have Needham qualify as a Massachusetts Green Community under the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources Green Communities program. This involves advocating the value of becoming a Green Community with key Town Boards and officials, building support within the community, and assisting with the process of meeting the qualifications where possible.

Green Needham serves as a nexus for those in the Needham community who want to go green. By putting a single face on diverse efforts, Green Needham can generate community-wide participation in environmental programs. In addition to schools, businesses, and institutions of higher education, the collaborative has been active with local houses of worship. First Parish Unitarian Universalist and the Congregational Church were leaders in the 10% Challenge. Among them, over 100 families committed to reduce their carbon footprint enough to keep three quarters of a million pounds of CO₂ out the atmosphere every year. Working through the Needham Clergy Association and MIP&L, Green Needham brought eight houses of worship together for an Environmental Stewardship workshop in May 2009.

Most importantly, the Green Needham Collaborative serves as an excellent example of how a few individuals can build collaboration and help a community get organized about going green. Not only does the Green Needham Collaborative make it easy to start going green if one is interested, but it also encourages the community to make the effort through education. For more information on the Green Needham Collaborative and their programs, visit their website at www.greenneedham.org or their wiki at wiki.greenneedham.org.

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