

Sustainable Floridians Program Launches

Program for Resource Efficient Communities
University of Florida

The University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service, in conjunction with UF's Program for Resource Efficient Communities (PREC), a FESC partner, has launched a new non-formal sustainable living education program called Sustainable Floridians Volunteer Program or Sustainable Floridians Master Volunteer Program.

The program combines the knowledge base of university experts with a discussion and action format designed to help individuals take steps toward sustainability. The program guides and motivates participants in creating Florida-appropriate sustainability action plans. Participants discover what their ecological footprint is and how they can shrink it to reduce resource consumption, save money, and become part of a transition to a more environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable future. The program emphasizes the role that individuals and households play in using water resources and fossil fuels and how reductions at home benefit both households and communities, especially in Florida.

Pilot classes took place in the fall of 2010 in Marion and Leon counties, with 40 participants completing the 6-week course (14 in Marion, 26 in Leon). Course topics included an introduction to the general principles of sustainability and the ecological footprint; water; energy; and transportation and land use. Course components included readings, lecture, and guided discussions. Participants were given data logs with which to begin recording their consumption of energy, water, as well as to record monthly vehicle miles traveled. People taking the course brought in utility bills, which opened the way for lively discussion about steps to reduce usage and bills. Follow-up contacts will be made to determine whether usage drops subsequent to the class.

Class members were given a master checklist with detailed recommendations for reducing resource use at the household level for energy, water, and transportation. The "low hanging fruit" actions were identified, as well as steps that involve more investment of time, money, and effort. Individual outcomes are still being assessed; however, early results include some participants' commitment to cutting back on amounts of water used for lawn watering.

In addition to providing plenty of information about ecological footprints, the course encouraged participants to create "ecological handprints" that improve their community. Class members were asked to take on a community project. The initial Marion County class formed a homeowner "green team." The initial Leon County class was recruited with the understanding that graduates would in turn facilitate sustainability discussion groups in the community.

One Leon County Sustainable Floridian already has coordinated and facilitated two study circles to discuss topics of sustainability and community health -- one in his neighborhood and one at his workplace. Two participants in the neighborhood course have in turn followed suit with a similar study circle in yet another neighborhood.

A community-wide Eco-Teams program in Tallahassee using Sustainable Floridians as facilitators is set to launch June 21st with the first orientation session for teams of study circle hosts and Sustainable Floridian facilitators. The Eco-Teams program is a partnership between UF/IFAS-Leon Extension, City of Tallahassee Department of Environmental Policy & Energy Resources, Leon County Office of Sustainability, and the local NGO "Sustainable Tallahassee." Coordination is being shepherded by Dr Tom Taylor, a Leon County Sustainable Floridians graduate and professional facilitator, who served for years as a principle instructor for the UF/IFAS Natural Resources Leadership Institute (NRLI) while he was FSU faculty with the Center for Conflict Resolution (CRC).

Pinellas County launched its pilot in April 2011 and began with 28 registered participants for the course. At the end of the seven week program, they graduated 26 Sustainable Floridian Master Trainees. Each of these trainees will donate 30 hours of volunteer time to Pinellas County Extension in the Sustainable Living Program Area.

Pinellas County Extension will provide training and support through monthly meetings and updates, hands on training to ensure proficiency with sustainability topics, and ongoing volunteer opportunities.

In addition, Pinellas County Extension developed a website

(<http://pinellas.ifas.ufl.edu/sustainability/sustainFloridians.shtml>) and created additional marketing pieces (newspaper ad, Open House invite) to support the program.

Marion County plans another class beginning June 21st and Pinellas and Leon counties will offer the program again in September 2011. Additional pilot classes are currently planned in Osceola and Sarasota counties.

The ultimate goal is formation of a master program with flexible elements to provide a forum for education, action, and community development for Florida communities.

Consumption Log							
This data log is a place for you to track energy and water consumption. Entering the data will allow you to see what results you obtain from conservation actions taken. It is hoped you will find taking conservation actions will save you money as well as reduce your ecological footprint. If you are able, track your usage for an entire year.							
Kilowatts							
Month	Kilowatt Hours (2009)	Kilowatt Hours (2010)	Kilowatt Hours (2011)	Percent Change	Average Daily Usage (2010)	Average Daily Usage (2011)	Notes
January	350	285	240	-16%	9.19	7.74	
February					0.00	0.00	
March					0.00	0.00	
April					0.00	0.00	
May					0.00	0.00	
June					0.00	0.00	
July					0.00	0.00	
August					0.00	0.00	
September					0.00	0.00	
October					0.00	0.00	
November					0.00	0.00	
December					0.00	0.00	
Total					0.77	0.65	

Sample page from Data Log given to participants



What uses more energy?
How we dwell?

Or how we move?

For conservation, there's no place
like home!
Especially in Florida

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Source: Nathan Zientz, University of Florida

Example of Content in Sustainable Floridians Program