**Greening Greater Racine: A Community Initiative.**

**Description and Mission**: *An inclusive environmental grass-roots movement of faith communities, environmental organizations, businesses, government agencies, schools, and citizens working to inspire, educate, and motivate people to take actions that make possible a healthier and more sustainable life in greater Racine now and in the future*.

**Origins**. Greening Greater Racine (GGR) began in the fall of 2014 with the Racine Green Congregations, soon joined by representatives of more than thirty environmental organizations. “Greening Greater Racine” gives focus to efforts in communities east of the Interstate: Racine County, the City of Racine, and the villages of Caledonia, Mount Pleasant, Sturtevant, North Bay, Wind Point, and Elmwood.

**The Natural Step**. GGR is guided by The Natural Step (TNS), a scientific-based program of four key principles originating in Sweden to foster sustainable decisions at the government, business, and community levels. It provides an excellent educational program, engages the community, empowers local decisions, and provides a common language and framework for community projects and programs.

**Our approach**. GGR takes a comprehensive approach in six spheres: 1) faith communities, 2) environmental groups; 3) businesses; 4) government agencies; 5) schools; and 6) the community. Our initial goal is to learn and promote the sustainable achievements already happening in these areas.

**Faith Communities and environmental groups.**

* **Visioning Workshop:** On April 11, 2015, sixty people representing ten faith groups and over thirty environmental organizations gathered at Mount Pleasant Lutheran Church to learn about The Natural Step and engage in a visioning process, presented by Karl van Lith and Stacie Reece, leaders in Sustainable Madison.
* **Follow-up Workshop**: On October 17, 2015, environmental organizations and faith communities met again to learn about each other. Each group submitted a one-page description of their organization and made a brief presentation.
* **Collective action groups**: At the fall workshop, the participants divided into four working groups: food, water, energy, native habitats. Each group continues to meet in order to develop plans and gather partners for collective action.

**Businesses and corporations.**

* **Introductory luncheon:** On April 30, 2015, GGR gathered twenty business representatives for lunch at Racine Community Foundation to consider sustainable business practices.
* **Planning Committee**: During the fall/ winter (2015-16), GGR has been meeting with representatives of businesses in greater Racine to establish a Sustainable Business Network.
* **Networking Meeting**: The first meeting of the Sustainable Business Network is set for April 19 from 7-9 am in the Racine Room at Wheaton Franciscan Hospital to learn from expert advice, hear success stories, and engage in networking opportunities. Workshops to follow.

**Government/Municipalities.**

* **Introductory Breakfast:** On April 30, 2015, GGR sponsored a breakfast meeting at the Mount Pleasant Community Center for about twenty representatives of city, county, and local villages.
* **Promotion of accomplishments**: Currently, GGR is gathering information to learn about and promote all the sustainable efforts that have already going on in the city, villages, and county.
* **Future Gathering**: GGR is planning to host another gathering of government agencies to provide resources, expertise, and networking as a basis for moving forward.

**Schools**.

* **Survey of Current Practices**: GGR is working with RUSD to survey current practices of environmental education and foster expansion of opportunities in cooperation with local environmental groups. We will work cooperatively to enhance and expand the programs already in place and participate in the review of the science curriculum.
* **Higher Expectations**: GGR is participating in the Higher Expectations program to promote sustainability in companies seeking employees.

**Residents/Neighborhoods**.

* **Golden Rondelle Program for 2015**: In the evening of April 30, GGR and the Eco-Justice Center sponsored a community program at the Golden Rondelle, “Eco-Municipality and the Natural Step: Lessons for a Sustainable Racine.” Led by Karl van Lith of Madison.
* **Golden Rondelle for 2016**: GGR will join Gateway and the Eco-Justice Center in sponsoring a program on April 18, titled “Green and Healthy: The Future of American Cities” led by Jim Schwab, Research Associate of the American Planning Association in Chicago.
* **Eco-Fest Racine**: On Saturday March 19, 2016, GGR and Gateway Technical College will sponsor an Eco-Fest Racine celebrating the many environmental initiatives in greater Racine for the benefit of the entire community: interactive displays, lawn and garden demonstrations, cooking demonstrations, a training workshop for butterfly gardens, children’s activities, and more.

**Promotion.** GGR seeks to promote through diverse media the many sustainable projects and programs present in various sectors of our area and already making a difference in greater Racine.

**Principles:** GGR seeks to:

* Build on earlier movements: Sustainable Racine and Green Racine.
* Actively pursue inclusive participation of the full diversity of the community.
* Use principles of collective action and outcome-based processes.
* Strengthen our community by supporting our most vulnerable people/neighborhoods.

**To learn more** about GGR and its participants, visit [www.greeninggreaterracine.weebly.com](http://www.greeninggreaterracine.weebly.com). If you or your organization would like to participate, contact David Rhoads at drhoads@lstc.edu.

**GGR Steering Committee Members**: Bob Beezat, Betty Brenneman, Marcia Buhler, Chris Gacek, Adele Helmle, Nancy Holmlund, Melissa Kaprelian-Becker, Marilyn Kiemen, Kate Kirbie (Secretary), Michael Mueller, Bill Thompkins, David Rhoads (Director), Tom Rutkowski, Sue Schuit, Sister Jean Verber, Melissa Warner, Sister Janet Weyker (Associate Director), Rose Woodruff (Treasurer).