



Case Study of Bluegrass Greensource

Keys to Success

-  **Project Description**
-  **Economic Value**
-  **Challenges & Advice**
-  **Benefits**
-  **Stewardship Meaning**

 Bluegrass Greensource, which is based in Lexington, is an environmental nonprofit serving 18 counties in Central Kentucky. Executive Director Amy Sohner says the goal of Greensource is to help adults and children, alike, to change their behavior in small ways to benefit the environment, with a focus on water quality, waste reduction and energy efficiency.

As a member of KY EXCEL, Kentucky's environmental leadership program, Bluegrass Greensource has undertaken many projects, including one designed to teach educators and students in Central Kentucky about coal energy and various alternatives. Greensource's Coal as Energy Education Project (CEEP) provided professional development opportunities for 20 science and social studies teachers of grades 4-12, from Anderson, Estill, Fayette, Garrard, Jessamine, Lincoln and Mercer counties. The teachers were taken to an underground coal mine in eastern Kentucky, visited a school outfitted with

a geothermal system and learned about solar power in Berea's Eco-Village.

Other projects include some at the Greensource office, such as providing a single-stream recycling dumpster that is available for all businesses surrounding the Greensource office to use. Staff members have bins beside their desk for recycling.

“People don't understand that there are small, easy ways to make a difference. Small things, like caulking, can make a big impact.”

Every person has a power strip for computers and other office equipment. When not in use, the power strips are turned off. Some other energy-savers include programmable thermostats. Because the office has two electric meters, a friendly competition was held among Greensource's 14 staff members to see which side of the office could save the most electricity.

The Greensource office has reusable plates and utensils that are taken to events or meetings and taken home to wash. Cloth towels are used in the restroom and kitchen areas instead of paper. Green cleaning products are used



to clean the office. Staff members extended their environmental efforts outside to stencil storm drains in the parking lot as a reminder not to throw trash and cigarette butts out, since they eventually reach local streams.

\$ With the availability of the recycling dumpster in the back parking lot, Greensource and area businesses have reduced the number of times dumpsters are tipped, saving money and decreasing the amount of materials sent to local landfills.

For the electricity usage competition, one side of the office saved \$50 a month and the other saved \$30. This inspired staff members to look for new ways to cut energy waste.

? As with any project, there were challenges to overcome. The



Children take part in stenciling storm-water drains in the parking lot.

CEEP project needed funds to transport teachers to the various sites. Greensource requested, and was granted, an amendment to the budget that would increase each school's field trip allocation.

“As a nonprofit, funding is the biggest challenge,” explains Sohner, about the many programs they would like to offer. “It’s hard for us to do things that are not covered by grants, because grants are for specific things. People don’t understand that there are small easy ways to make a difference. Small things, like caulking, can make a big impact.”

+ In the CEEP program, teachers learned to use hands-on activities to teach their classes about energy conservation, origination and alternatives. The overwhelming response from the participants was that the workshop was very beneficial and gave the teachers more practical experience with the sources of energy used in the state. The lessons resulted in student-led communitywide presentations about energy. Due to the outreach and training for the teachers, a large number of students were also educated about the various energy alternatives available.



Bluegrass PRIDE provides this recycling dumpster for neighboring businesses.

Sohner says, “We try to help teachers to teach by using real-life examples, which makes it more relevant.”

🌿 “Environmental issues have become more prevalent than they were 11 years ago,” says Sohner. “This has made things easier. Bluegrass Greensource provides a service welcomed by everyone. We target everyone, including people who do not call themselves environmentalists. We serve a niche that no one else serves.”

HELPFUL HINT: Plant a seed to benefit the environment by volunteering to teach others about protecting the Commonwealth’s resources. This may inspire others to do the same.