

North Forty News

and archives of the Fossil Creek Current
The community newspaper for northern Larimer County, Colorado

May 2010

[News](#) [Home Page](#) [About Us](#) [Advertising Info](#) [Community Page](#)

Climate Wise blends benefits for business, environment

By Dan MacArthur
North Forty News

Green business is good business that creates jobs and nourishes the economy while preserving the environment locally and beyond.

That was the message delivered by Fort Collins Mayor Doug Hutchinson at the annual EnvirOvation Climate Wise Showcase.

The April event honored the growing number of businesses contributing to environmental and economic sustainability by transforming their operations.

Since its creation in 2000, nearly 200 businesses large and small have joined the Climate Wise program. Collectively they employ some 27,000 workers ranging from one-person operations to Colorado State University, the largest employer in northern Colorado.

During that decade, those partners are estimated to have realized \$33 million in savings through conservation efforts while benefitting the environment. Such efforts include conserving nearly 5 billion gallons of water – enough to fill the City Park swimming pool 24,000 times – and diverting 110,200 tons of waste – equal to the weight of 7,900 city buses.

Hutchinson said the economy and environment are not mutually exclusive. In fact, he said, they support the city's leadership in the new energy economy as demonstrated by creation of the Northern Colorado Clean Energy Cluster. The cutting-edge consortium includes Fort Collins, CSU, green businesses, the environmental community and venture capitalists.

Since the cluster was created in 2006, Hutchinson noted, clean-energy jobs have increased by 19 percent and

the almost 50 clean energy cluster businesses expect to add 1,650 new clean-energy positions within five years.

"Simply put, the clean energy industry is booming in Fort Collins," he said.

Future economic development, Hutchinson continued, will depend on those green technologies as well as the green practices of those participating in programs such as Climate Wise.

Climate Wise is a voluntary program offering technical advice and networking opportunities to local businesses and organizations. It helps them save energy, conserve water, minimize waste and reduce greenhouse gas emissions attributed to global warming. Fort Collins has set a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 20 percent below the 2005 level by 2020.

Efforts of the business partners ranged from modest to monumental. During 2009, Climate Wise partners implemented nearly 1,000 conservation projects that benefited both the environment and the bottom line. Collectively they saved \$8.4 million and reduced the equivalent of 117,000 tons of carbon dioxide, according to Climate Wise coordinator Kathy Collier. Those results were realized through a range of measures to minimize transportation, divert materials from the landfill, and reduce energy and water use.

CooperSmith's, a downtown Fort Collins brewpub, for example, repaired several water leaks resulting in a savings of more than 3 million gallons a year.

Another downtown restaurant, the Rio Grande, earned the top platinum status for its aggressive program that monthly diverts 240 cubic yards of recyclables from the landfill.

Clean Air Lawn Care also earned platinum status for its nationally recognized approach to reducing the noise and emissions from lawnmowers. They generate far more carbon dioxide than vehicles and are estimated to create up to 10 percent of the United States' air pollution.

Company founder and chief executive officer Kelly Giard was the featured speaker. A dedicated environmentalist and former stockbroker, he founded Clean Air Lawn Care in 2006, operating out of his Fort Collins garage. Unlike other similar services using traditional gas-fueled mowers, Clean Air Lawn Care uses equipment powered by biofuels or recharged with solar panels. Clippings and other organic materials are recycled on-site or at a recycling center.

The concept proved to be immensely popular and profitable. Within a year, Clean Air Lawn Care grew from a small local business to a national one with nine offices across the country. Today, 22 franchises have been sold.

Giard, who was named Entrepreneur magazine's Emerging Entrepreneur of 2009, described the company as a "triple-win business opportunity." It offers customers a quality, competitively priced service that creates jobs while reducing air pollution and waste.

"It's a simple, basic thing," he said. "But it's very powerful."

More information on the Climate Wise program is available at <http://fcgov.com/climatewise>.

Do you have a news tip? Do you have questions about a news story? Please contact our staff by phone (970-221-0213) or e-mail info@northfortynews.com.

[News](#)

[Home Page](#)

[About Us](#)

[Advertising Info](#)

[Community Page](#)

© North Forty News 2010

Send your comments and questions to info@northfortynews.com

Web site by S. Virginia De Herdt, Freelance Writer

Send your comments and questions about this web site to webmaster@northfortynews.com

Page updated 4/29/2010