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City green: Program helps local businesses in making Wise choice

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City green*

The city of Fort Collins has a program that has helped businesses save more than \$7.2 million during 2008, reduced emissions of greenhouse gases by more than 100,000 tons and won innovative business awards.

All of these distinctions belong to the Climate Wise Program, which works to achieve its ends by inviting local businesses to voluntarily participate as partners in a collaborative effort to enhance environmental stewardship and economic health.

These efforts reduce the businesses' emissions of greenhouse gases and also help companies save money in operations.

Climate Wise partners benefit through waste reduction, energy efficiency, water conservation and transportation reduction measures. These measures are based on environmental technical assessments of partner operations provided by Climate Wise. In addition, Climate Wise provides educational and business support, peer-to-peer networking events and public recognition.

Among the outreach and training opportunities offered to partners are a Climate Wise annual Fall Fair; new business assessment and action seminars and workshops focused on optimizing and reducing waste, engaging employees, the myClimateWise database and EnviroVation: A Climate Wise Showcase. EnviroVation is an annual event during which businesses are recognized by partnership levels (platinum, silver, gold and bronze) based on the rigor of their environmental initiatives per specific goals and milestones.

Climate Wise has more than 170 local business partners, ranging from small organizations to large ones, whose commitment to environmental protection is exemplary.

In recognition of the program's excellence and thanks to the efforts of businesses and the Climate Wise staff, the Harvard Kennedy School of Government recognized Climate Wise as one of the Top 50 Programs of the Innovations in American Government award. In addition, the Alliance for Innovation presented the program with an Outstanding Achievement in Local Government Innovation award earlier this year. And this summer, Kathy Collier, program manager for Climate Wise, was one of only 10 recipients of the Northern Colorado Women of Influence awards presented by the Northern Colorado Business Report for her passion, leadership and vision.

At the heart of the program is a collaborative spirit. Climate Wise has established service learning projects with Colorado State University's Institute for the Built Environment, the university's Department of Political Science, Student Sustainability Center and the Warner College of Natural Resources. It also has partnered with Be Local Northern Colorado, FortZED (Zero Energy District) Green Restaurant Initiative to assist restaurants with the implementation of energy conservation and efficiency practices and partnered with the U.S. Green Building Council.

To learn more about this innovative project, visit <http://fcgov.com/climatewise>.
