



E- Newsletter - June 2008

www.sustainableliving.org.nz

Sustainability is finally starting to get the public attention it deserves. In March, Christchurch's hosting of *Earth Hour* drew attention nationally to households' extravagant use of electricity and ways to reduce demand.

World Environment Day on 5 June will also focus attention on the wide range of sustainable pathways people can take. Sustainable Living tutors, council staff and evaluators will meet that day, video-linked between Christchurch and Auckland, to review what we are learning from involvement in this and similar action programmes. We aim to then share our findings with the partner councils on DVD recording, ensuring a small 'carbon footprint' for this event compared to typical national conferences.

In the past few months, the Sustainable Living Programme has received a growing number of media enquiries. We thank the Ministry for the Environment and partner councils for sponsoring a publicity effort that is growing both our media profile and rate of [website registration](#) by individuals. This all helps to recruit new councils and we are delighted to announce that Auckland City Council has just come on board, to join this year's earlier partner recruits: Palmerston North, Kapiti Coast, Greater Wellington and Gisborne. Negotiations are under way with staff contacts in another six councils, mostly in the North Island, to introduce SL Programme in their areas.

Read on to find out more....

New Tutors Step Forward in Auckland

Auckland City Council announced it would join the programme in April, and a brief mention of this published in the *NZ Herald*, resulted in 70 enquiries from potential tutors across Auckland and Waikato. These people have now been shortlisted. Others who enquired may become course participants. There were also several offers of new venues, and previous venues such as Kaipatiki Centre (North Shore) and EcoMatters Trust Sustainable Living Centre (New Lynn) re-confirmed their interest. Discussion with community education providers at high schools, Waitakere WEA and an arts venue in Manukau will result in several new courses, spread across the greater Auckland area, and 'offshore' to Waiheke Island High School. Check the website from July for these course listings.

[Follow this link](#) for information on how your Council could become a partner in the Programme for 2008-9.

Charitable Trust Taking Shape

Until now, the Marlborough District Council has led this expanding education and action programme. Now a not-for-profit organisation is being formed, seeking charitable status, to take forward the work of its 24 local government partners in the 'Sustainable Living Education Trust'. The inaugural trustees are volunteers, drawn

from actively-involved council staff. Expect more on the Trust, and how you can help it to develop, in our next newsletter.

From Learners to Tutors

Recent Christchurch Sustainable Living courses have recruited new tutor-facilitators from among the participants. City Council staff in-house course member Sue, will join Riccarton High School course participant (and fellow Council staff member) Oliver, to run their first course from 30 July in North New Brighton. Risingholme Community Centre course member Lesley is set to co-tutor a Term 4 daytime course at the WEA in the central city, along with another former Riccarton High School course participant, Janet. Other active Christchurch tutors include experienced teacher Paul, who led the 2008 Canterbury University students' *Eco My Flat* course, and Jocelyn, who is facilitating a course in Lyttelton this term. They will together run a course in Term3 at Hagley Community College. "Building up a tutor team like this allows us to offer more courses across the city in response to fast-growing demand," says the City Council Principal Advisor on Sustainability, Tony Moore. Christchurch City has distributed thousands of publicity brochures, prompting the fastest rate of registration of interest at the website, of any NZ location. "



Staff at Christchurch City Council met after work for a Sustainable Living course, led by Rhys Taylor and by Tony Moore (standing, centre), to learn about and discuss practical actions they could take at home. Many gathered ideas that they found were also useful for work. Similar in-house courses have run for staff at Waitakere City, Dunedin and Gisborne Councils, and in office workplaces for Landcare Research Lincoln and URS Ltd.

Adapting SLP course material for use in business workplaces is being explored by the Sustainable Business Company, which has negotiated a one year trial licence, in a few regions, to use the SLP 'brand'.

The Multiplication Effect

The Sustainable Living message isn't just taken up by those who attend the programme. According to Marlborough District Council education officer and course facilitator, Annie McDonald, the programme's actions are spreading much wider.

In Blenheim recently, Annie was stopped on the street and asked if she knew where information could be found on food additives.

The woman who stopped her had just visited a friend who had attended SLP's shopping topic. She was inspired by her friend's account of the programme to seek out more information.

"This happens quite regularly. People hear about the courses and want to know more themselves," says Annie.

In Blenheim, SLP workshop or course sessions are held once a month on a different topic and regularly attract 35 to 40 people. "There's already a waiting list for the next one."

Popular topics are organic edible gardens, sustainable shopping and waste, composting, and energy use. More than 450 people attended SLP courses in Marlborough last year.

Following the composting workshop, another woman was so impressed by the EM Bokashi bucket system her friend had bought and told her about, that she went out and bought buckets for her whole family for Christmas, despite not having attended!

"It's the power of multiplication. The feedback I get is that people tell others who go off and do the same thing. It's great. It just goes to show that even though there might only be 40 people that take part in each of our workshops, the message and the action spreads much further" says Annie.

SLP Case study 3:

Doing your bit for a better world

Living a more sustainable, environmentally aware lifestyle is easier than you think. Just a few small yet meaningful changes can help you limit your impact on the Earth and make a real difference to the local city environment. And did we mention the health benefits and cost savings?

For Lisa, who attended a Sustainable Living course several years ago, it was the variety of topics covered that really appealed. The information gathered is still useful.

"The course offered so many different ways of looking at sustainability. Whether you're interested in house improvements, like I was, or gardening or transport – there really is something for everyone."

The course timing was also an attraction – it was easy for her to attend and worked in really well with her job.

The Sustainable Living programme offers tips and techniques that are practical, realistic and can make a real difference. In Lisa's case, she learnt about ways she

could improve her house to make it warmer in winter and cooler in summer, without costing a fortune.

"Since the course, we've put our heaters on timers and bought a dehumidifier which has made a huge difference to our house comfort in winter. All our light bulbs are now energy efficient and this, along with switching off appliances when they are not in use, has really reduced our power bills. We now almost qualify to be what our power company calls a 'low user'."

Bulk-buying was another handy tip that Lisa picked up from the course – buying items loose or from bulk bins not only saves on packaging, it's also cheaper.



Lisa already biked to work, or caught the bus if it was raining – both of which are low-emission forms of transport. She is a keen gardener and has always grown some of her own vegetables. However the course really reinforced her commitment to in composting, and showed her some new ways she could improve her garden. Since then she's dismantled a garage and turned that space into extra garden!

"One of the things the course showed me was how to create a 'no watering garden', which is what I have done in the front of our house. It's mainly natives and if plants can't survive without extra water, then they get replaced with something that can."



To find out how you can make your home healthier, or just how easily you can live a more eco-friendly lifestyle in town, visit: www.sustainableliving.org.nz

Lisa's story is an example of the appeal of the Sustainable Living Programme to young professionals. Her story features on one of our national promotional brochures, while a second brochure features Margaret, a busy mum of teenage children who was switched onto the programme when her children brought home an interest in sustainability from school. These brochures are available to readers on request as PDF files (to email) or in print (to mail) so that you can tell others about the Sustainable Living Programme. Contact rhys@sustainableliving.org.nz by email, phone 03 960 2656 or write to PO Box 13-121 Armagh Street, Christchurch 8141 to request either version plus some free posters promoting the website.

SLP Case study 4:

Books for schools and vegetables for staff

Growing vegetables and caring for books is an unusual combination. But thanks to staff sustainability initiatives, supported and developed by a team member who participated in a Sustainable Living course, it will soon be the reality at a Christchurch library office.

Transforming her workplace into a sustainable environment is proving fascinating, says Joanne Churcher of the National Library of NZ, School Services South.

She is well on the way to creating an edible paradise within her workspace, as well as introducing a raft of sustainable initiatives to complement the recycling and composting already supported by the team. These include replacing paper systems with digital, moving to eco friendly cleaning products and the use of recycled paper options.

With 23 staff in the section, Joanne might have expected some resistance, but her colleagues have been supportive.

"I'm the only one who's been on a SLP course at the moment, but a lot of the guys are interested in sustainability."

While it takes time to research new options, Joanne is impressed by the alternatives.

"I asked our suppliers to search out greener options for a lot of the things we use and the results have been very positive. Our cleaning and dishwashing products are eco-friendly, we are now using a strapping on our outbound cartons of books that is made from 20% recycled plastic, our paper is 100% recycled, plus I've filled up one of the bins on the copier with paper that's been used on one side only and people are happily using it for copying that doesn't leave the building. All our requests for books are printed on used paper as well. I've ordered 100% recycled envelopes and they're no more expensive than the 'virgin' ones."

But Joanne is most excited about being able to start a vegetable garden at work.

"We had money in our budget for horticulture and we were going to use it for flower beds out the front, but for us, veggies are now a better idea."

"I'm planning to grow tomatoes, capsicums, courgettes, carrots, radishes, spring onions, salad greens and herbs that we'll be able to harvest for our lunches. If it all goes according to plan everyone will 'adopt' a plant or crop and help out in the garden and I'm working on getting the OK for a worm farm. When I announced it at the Staff Meeting everyone was very enthusiastic as it will benefit us all. This is going to be so much fun; I can't wait to get started."



Recycling bins now have pride of place in the staff lunchroom at National Library of New Zealand, School Services South.

University students vie for Eco title

The inaugural *Eco-My-Flat* competition ran in March this year with 34 University of Canterbury student flats vying to be recognised as the most eco-friendly. Each week in March, the flats focused on a different theme - energy, waste, transport and shopping. Members of the participating flats had to submit blog entries detailing their progress in each category.

The best eco flat was awarded to the inhabitants of *The Castle*. Where some flats focused on one particular area, *The Castle* residents did everything! Their commitment to eco flatting included baking their own bread, growing fresh garden produce (until they ran out of room to plant any more), preserving fruit, innovative insulation solutions and better curtains and then talking to their landlords about insulation for their hot water cylinder. They also bought a power meter from Dick Smith and did a major investigation of their electricity usage, complete with graphs and illustrations.

The weekly Sustainable Living workshops offered to competition entrants were facilitated by local Sustainable Living Programme tutor Paul de Spa. At the end of March, prizes were awarded for each of the four competition themes, as well as the most creative and innovative solutions, the most improved flat and the most 'eco' flat.

The Eco-My-Flat competition is part of a wider programme promoting sustainability at the University of Canterbury. For more information on the recent competition, check out www.sustain.canterbury.ac.nz/ecomyflat/competition.shtml

Thanks

Support for the national development of Sustainable Living Programme, updating of education materials and evaluation in 2007-8 has come from the Households team at Ministry for the Environment and from the 24 partner councils (listed and linked from our website). Visit the MfE's [Sustainability Challenge](http://www.mfe.govt.nz/sustainability-challenge) website to obtain a PDF copy of their new booklet of case studies, including one from a Sustainable Living course participant in Hawkes Bay.

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