

Posted: January 9

Updated: Today at 12:15 PM

Sustain coalition meets, thinks, plans

WATERVILLE -- Sustain Mid-Maine Coalition members shared successes of 2011 and brainstormed about effectively promoting the organization's goals at Saturday's third annual meeting.

The nonprofit, created in 2009 with a vision that recognized the planet's survival depends on a healthy and safe environment, seeks to conserve resources, maintain a healthy environment and promote economic prosperity.

The group achieved quite a bit in 2011, said coordinator Linda Woods, thanks to 92 people who volunteered 1,699 hours.

Recent highlights included winning grants, one of which which helped 47 area citizens obtain an energy audits, establishing four community gardens and increasing the number of local walking trails.

Mike Heavener, president of the coalition, said it's up to the group to shatter the myth that living sustainably means giving up quality of life.

"We need to be the agent of change," he said, encouraging members to be diligent and consistent in their message and behaviors that "there's a better way of doing things."

In 2012, Heavener said financial stability and volunteer recruitment are additional points of emphasis for the group, which is comprised of five teams -- Residential Energy, Transportation, Education, Local Foods, and Rethink, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

Mayor Karen Heck suggested recruiting young, energetic people with solid networking and technology skills.

She also encouraged members to give input at City Council meetings to both shape policy and gain media attention.

Jim Wood, chairman for the Transportation team, said several Colby College students had contributed to the success of the Kennebec Explorer transit program. Wood said ridership on the buses, which provide weekday service in and between Waterville and Augusta, hit an all-time high of 5,900 in December.

Ross Nason, chairman of the Rethink, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle team, said highlights of 2011 included composting food waste from the Taste of Waterville event and placing new signage at Skills Recycling Facility on Industrial Park Road.

Melissa Hackett, chairperson of the four-member education team, sought direction as to whether the group should strive to educate the general public about sustainability or focus on teachers and students.

Educator Eric Brown suggested getting into schools.

Jim Easton advised that educational posters and materials should reflect the urgency and reality of the message. Climate change, he said, "is really something to fear."

Iver Lofving agreed. "It's survival; it's not cute," he said.

To become involved or learn more, email coordinator@sustainmidmaine.org, call 680-4208 or visit Sustain Mid-Maine Coalition's Facebook page.

Beth Staples -- 861-9252

bstaples@centralmaine.com

Were you interviewed for this story? If so, please fill out our [accuracy form](#)

[Send Question/Comment to the Publisher](#)

[Tweet](#)<

Find this article at:

http://www.onlinesentinel.com/news/sustain-coalition-meets-thinks-plans_2012-01-08.html

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.