



Needham Rises to the (10%) Challenge!



What: 10% Challenge Earth Day Awards

When: April 22 at 4:00 pm

Where: Town Hall

Who: Green Needham, School Superintendent Dan Gutekanst, town officials

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Nearly 40 percent of the members of the Needham League of Women Voters took it. Nearly a third of the members of First Parish in Needham Unitarian Universalist Church took it. The entire staff of the Needham Health Department took it. Now Needham schools are joining in the Green Needham Collaborative's challenge to residents, businesses, schools, and offices to cut their energy footprint by 10 percent.

On Earth Day, April 22, Green Needham will present its first awards to groups that have accepted the challenge. But residents aren't doing this alone. School-based groups are reaching out to encourage school families to participate. School Superintendent Dan Gutekanst will announce these programs and outline energy-saving actions in the Needham Public Schools. Town officials will highlight their commitment to reducing municipal energy use.

The 10% Challenge, which kicked off in January, is aimed at reducing global warming by cutting the emission of carbon dioxide, the most common of greenhouse gasses. Green Needham's Web-based program offers easy-to-implement tips for reducing a household's carbon footprint—and its utility bills, too. Visit challenge.greenneedham.org, click a few buttons, and let the program do the number crunching.

First Parish Unitarian Universalist is aiming for the highest level of recognition for its carbon-reducing efforts. Nearly 60 households in the congregation have taken the energy challenge, close to the church's goal of 30 percent participation.

Anne Hayek, who is on the Green Committee of Needham Congregational Church, says 25 of 200 church households have already submitted energy plans and another 40 have expressed interest. Hayek, a mechanical engineer by training, meticulously tracks the energy consumption of her household. The family cut their natural gas consumption for heating and hot water by 11 percent from 2007 to 2008, and that's factoring in weather differences. Every year, she says, her family finds new ways to stay warm while turning down the dial. This year, they bought SmartWool long underwear.

Community-wide, 175 households have taken the 10% Energy Challenge so far, committing to actions that would keep 1,286,000 pounds of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere a year. That's the equivalent of taking 130 mid-size cars off the road. Green Needham Chair Michael Greis wants to build on that momentum saying, "Saving energy can become as much a part of Needham's identity – and as successful – as recycling has."

Contacts for more information on the **Green Needham Collaborative** or the **10% Challenge**:

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Or visit <http://www.greenneedham.org>