



## Needham Rises to the (10%) Challenge!



On Earth Day, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, a group gathered at Needham's Town Hall to recognize and celebrate a community-wide effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, cut energy use and save money. Green Needham Chair Michael Greis announced the successful completion of the initial phase of Green Needham's 10% Energy Challenge, presenting awards to community groups that stepped up to take the challenge, helping drive community awareness and participation.

Green Needham's 10% Energy Challenge, which kicked off in January, aims at reducing global warming by cutting the emission of carbon dioxide, the most common of the greenhouse gasses. Green Needham's Web-based program at [challenge.greenneedham.org](http://challenge.greenneedham.org), offers easy-to-implement tips for reducing a household's carbon footprint—and its utility bills, too.

So far, over 200 households have taken the challenge, committing to actions that would keep 1,500,000 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere. That's the equivalent of taking 150 mid-size cars off the road.

Encouraging community groups to take the challenge together was a natural one, observed Greis – “it's the way the Green Needham Collaborative works. We encourage all parts of the community to work together.” Green Needham's Eleanor Rosellini led the 10% Challenge effort and recruited groups to take the Challenge. Today's event honored ten groups who have already achieved high levels of participation:

- League of Women Voters Needham – Gold level
- First Parish Unitarian Universalist – Gold level
- Congregational Church – Bronze level
- Wellesley Friends Meeting
- Needham Health Department – Gold level (100% participation)
- Needham Community Farm Board of Directors – Gold level (100% participation)
- Needham Science Center – Gold level (100% participation)
- Kalmia Garden Club
- Number One Book Club

Temple Beth Shalom was recognized as well for implementing its own carbon footprint reduction program.

But it isn't just residents that are driving this effort. The Needham Public Schools and the Town of Needham are also taking a leading role in reducing energy use.

School Superintendent Dan Gutekanst followed the awards presentations by highlighting Earth Day programs that were held across the Needham Public Schools, embodying the system's core values of Community and Active Citizenship. The Superintendent also announced that many of the schools would be supporting the next phase of the Challenge by kicking off their own 10%

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Challenge programs when they return from vacation next week. And, in collaboration with the Town's Department of Public Facilities, the schools are developing a plan to reduce energy use by 5%.

Selectman Jerry Wasserman followed, providing a high-level outline of the programs put into place by Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick to reduce the Town's use of energy. Wasserman also highlighted the focus on energy-efficient buildings, noting that the new High Rock School will be the most energy efficient building ever in the Town of Needham – at least until the new Public Services Administration building comes on line next year, that is. The PSA Building will be heated and cooled using geothermal energy, almost eliminating the use of fossil fuels at that facility.

The Town's Director of Public Facilities, Chip Laffey, filled out the list of Town initiatives, including:

- Purchases of fuel-efficient hybrid vehicles for the Town's fleet
- Working with Green Needham to install a test tower at the RTS to evaluate the site's potential for generating wind power
- Implementation of the program to increase recycling in the schools from 3% to 45%
- Replacement of streetlights with high-efficiency sodium vapor lamps
- Replacement of incandescent traffic lights with LED lights using 80% less energy
- Installation of 2 kW solar array (from the Solar Challenge program) at the High Rock School
- Plans to use generators in the Town to raise revenue by selling excess electricity to the grid during times of peak demand

All these efforts not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save energy, but generate a payback to the community. Cost saving at the household and the municipal level keeps money in the community, freeing up funds for other town needs and reducing the burden on the taxpayer. Green Needham's 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."

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