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Earth Care e-News

bringing Hoosiers of faith together to help curb global climate change

Bloomington, Indiana, June, 2011

Highlights of this issue

- [Tornadoes and Hope](#)
- [Report on Going Solar meeting and coming plans](#)
- [Involving teens in weatherization work](#)
- [Task of the Month for June](#)
- [Walbicus 2011](#)
- [Online: Planning ahead for the reality of climate change](#)
- [Community Happenings](#)
- [Seventh Day Initiative of Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light](#)
- [A Special Way to Support the Work of Earth Care](#)

Tornadoes and Hope

Scientists call the tornadoes in Tuscaloosa, Joplin and Bloomington – and last summer's floods that left millions of Pakistanis homeless - cases of extreme weather and tell us that a byproduct of a warming planet will be increasingly frequent extreme weather.

Let's consider tornadoes a bit more closely. Tornadoes require a combination of ingredients, one of which is wind shear and the second of which is warm moist air under dry cool air. Not surprisingly, a warmer climate increases the probability that the warm moist air will be both warmer and more moist.

The result is a stronger storm updraft with a potentially stronger probability of tornado formation. While this increased probability is important from the view of total damage done in a season, we cannot attribute the strength of an individual storm to our warming planet. Since warm moist air is the source of energy for storms, a warming atmosphere is expected to cause more more energetic storms.

It is worth noting that the last two decades have been the warmest on record. The probability of severe storms is projected to increase.

Of course, this is frightening. To avert the worst, we must use less energy and get our energy from the sun, wind and other renewable sources – and we must make these shifts with great speed. We can and we are. As described in more detail below:

- A May 18th Solar Leadership Forum organized by SIREN and Earth Care attracted an overflow crowd – forty of whom signed up on the spot for solar pre-assessments;
- Soon, First Presbyterian will hold a similar solar forum for its own members. The Dunn St. Neighborhood Association did last night – and others will follow; and
- On May 22nd, seventeen kids from Beth Shalom, the Islamic Center, and First Christian spent all their Sunday afternoon cheerfully helping strangers cut their home energy use.

And we are not alone. Faith communities across the state are helping their members cut their reliance on dirty energy. We will "curb the beast". Please join us.

By Madi Hirschland

Bloomington is Going Solar

SIREN and Earth Care's first Solar Leadership Forum drew an overflow crowd. In a brief and highly informative presentation, SIREN engineer Woodie Bessler showed that solar is a sound financial investment and, for most households, the most cost-effective technology for reducing their carbon emissions. Forty households signed up for a free solar pre-assessment on the spot and First Presbyterian Church and Dunn St. Neighborhood Association have already booked SIREN for a repeat workshop for their members.



By cutting its electricity usage by 10%, a typical Bloomington household with a solar mortgage can cover 60% of its electricity usage with solar energy at a net projected cost of \$10 a month. For the same cost, households that cut their electricity use by 50% - as Bessler and numerous members of the audience have done – can be free of coal-fired electricity at no net cost. And, if a typical household purchases a solar array up front, it can generate a net lifetime savings from its array of \$8000.

The first in line for a SIREN solar pre-assessment, Nobel laureate and IU Professor Elinor Ostrom announced to participants that she is going to install solar panels at her home and cajoled the group to follow suit and let other people know :

It's GOT to be what we do. Because if we sit around and just wait for the guys up there - they are arguing, bickering, debating over all sorts of issues... we can wait for another five, ten, fifteen, twenty years. If we at a local level take action and let other people know about it, we can achieve a lot, and then eventually we'll embarrass them and get them to take action - so LETS GO!



Which will be Bloomington's first solar congregation? Its first solar neighborhood? The time is now. If you can bring together members of 15 or more households, SIREN will replicate the workshop for your neighbors or colleagues or congregation.

If you'd like to be on the new SIREN Q & A listserv for people looking into solar, you're interested in organizing a solar workshop for your workmates or neighbors, or you'd like to attend such a workshop, please contact webmaster@sirensolar.org. If you'd like a solar presentation at your congregation, please contact info@earthcareindiana.org or 339-7202. Join the solar leaders as we tip our town towards the sun.

Our Kids - Christian, Jewish and Muslim - Leading the Way

Learn Skills, Cut Carbon Emissions

Meaningful and Fun Greening Work

On Sunday May 22nd, a wonderful group of 23 kids and adults from First Christian, the Islamic Center and Beth Shalom spent the afternoon wrapping water heaters, insulating pipes, and sealing exterior cracks in the homes of strangers. When the end of the day found one group working near the home of Woodie and Pam Bessler stopped by to see their just-installed solar panels. Pam beamed as she showed the group her electric meter - spinning backwards. The kids were uniformly impressed with the glorious shining array.



Top row: Jessica Daniel, Michael Dodds, Daniel Moss, Hashim Raza
Middle: Meghan Pottenger, Jacob Lee, Mohammed Dabdoub, Zakaria Dabdoub, Tamar Moss
Bottom: Dina Dajani, Sabrina Niyonsaba, Josette Niyonsaba

Before they were trained and went out in teams, the kids sat in a circle and introduced each other. As one of the adults lightly broached why we do this work - to reduce energy use because of climate change - a nine-year old piped up, "Well, then, shall we get more kids?" while a parent whose country has been devastated by this change, wept.



Foreground following around the circle clockwise: Daniel Moss, Tamar Moss, Brandon Lee, Jacob Lee, Dina Dajani, Madi Hirschland, Jacqui Bauer, Amira Sabry, Mohammed Dabdoub, Zakaria Dabdoub, Humza Raza, Amanda Adhami, Josette Niyonsaba, Sabrina Niyonsaba, Ghassan Dajani, (not in picture), Hashim Raza, Sam Zlotnick, Megan Moore, Ben Calvert-Rosenberger

But, an afternoon like that, as a bunch of kids drop by the new neighborhood solar installation on their way back from weatherizing - feels hopeful.

T.O.M. News

Join with your congregation in Earth Care's
12-Month Action Program to cut your household energy use.

Task of the Month

**Set AC thermostat to 78 degrees
or higher**



In June, the Earth Care Task of the Month program enters its sixth month. Households of several Bloomington congregations are working to accomplish major changes in their energy consumption while saving money at the same time. They've tackled everything from showerheads to clothes-dryers. Now comes possibly the toughest challenge of all for some of us:

Set your summer thermostat to 78 degrees or higher

Our area's high humidity tempts us to lower air conditioning settings for hours at a time. Yet in the typical home, air conditioning uses more electricity than anything else. The U.S. annual electrical usage exceeds the entire electricity consumption of two of the world's most populous and hotter countries – India and Indonesia.

Air conditioning is an energy villain. Overall about 16% of our total energy bills are devoted to cooling. A window unit AC uses 500-1440 watts, while a 2.5-ton central system uses about 3500 watts. For comparison purposes, a floor fan uses only 100 watts at its highest speed, and ceiling fans use only 15-95 watts depending on speed and size.

On the hottest days it helps to use ceiling fans and to close window shades. Ceiling fans can make a room feel around 10 degrees cooler! If there are days when you can set your thermostat to 80, you'll save 16% on your energy bills. For more tips go to Earth Care's [Task of the Month site](#) and hit the June link.

Check out michaelbluejay.com/electricity/cooling.html. You'll find out why it doesn't make sense to leave your AC on all day when you're at work.

Congregational Events

WALBICUS 2011

May 2011 was Walbicus Month this year. Readers might enjoy this photo of fancifully decorated bikes that the Earth Stewards group at First Presbyterian Church displayed in the church entryway as an advertisement for Walbicus this year. Thanks to the Lotus Arts Festival for loaning us the bikes!



Do you have stories or pictures to share of how your group is addressing issues of climate change? Are you having a special program or event that others in the community ought to know about? **Send your stories to [Earth Care eNews](#).**

Online Resources

Planning ahead for climate change

An interesting article appeared in the Monday, May 23, issue of the New York Times explaining how Chicago is incorporating climate change into several aspects

of its city planning, all under the radar to avoid raising political hackles.

The article, *Changes in the Air: A City Prepares for a Warm Long-Term Forecast*, by Leslie Kaufman, shows how city planners in Chicago are choosing different types of trees and pavement materials, for example, after climate scientists have advised them to prepare for a wetter, steamier future. See this [link](#) for the whole article.

Community Happenings

I have a story to share from one of the MLK Day service projects. Members of the Bloomington Commission on Sustainability were weatherizing homes with high school students, under the direction of Jacqui Bauer. The students were members of the BHSS Environmental Club. One of the homeowners was worried about the amount of insulation in their attic so we opened the trap door to take a look. As we were peering in, one of the students remarked "wow this is really cool, I've never seen inside an attic before." Yet by the end of the day, I overheard this same student advising another homeowner about the R-factors in insulation.

I love this work!

From Cynthia Schultz

The Seventh Day Initiative of HIPL

Would your congregation like to be one of the hundred?

Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light seeks to assist one hundred congregations from twenty faith traditions from across the state to:

- Cut their own energy by at least one seventh
- Help them inspire and equip at least one third of their members to do the same.

If you think that your congregation or a congregation you know might be interested, please contact mhirschland@gmail.com for more information.

A Special Way to Support the Work of Earth Care

Want to make do with less air conditioning this summer?

Master Carpenters of Bloomington can help keep you cool!

Call today for a free estimate on installing ceiling fans and whole-house fans, repairing or replacing windows or just the screens, installing or repairing doors, and more.

MCBTN donates 10% of proceeds from energy efficiency work to Earth Care's Task of the Month program. Call 325-0902 or email MCBTN@hotmail.com

Earth Care e-News Editors: Allan Edmonds (First Presbyterian) and Ria Collee (Friends Meeting)

Check out our website at www.earthcareindiana.org to learn more about Earth Care.

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