

**Greening Greater Racine: A Community Initiative**  
**Pathways to Sustainability: A Celebratory Event**

Greening Greater Racine (GGR) convened a gathering of over 50 people on Saturday morning October 17 at the Fellowship of Christian Believers Church to celebrate the many environmental programs and activities taking place in the Racine area. Host Pastor Bill Thompkins welcomed the group. Dave Rhoads then briefly outlined activities that GGR is initiating with faith communities and environmental groups as well as with businesses, government agencies, schools, and residents. One of our first priorities is to promote what is already taking place.

In preparation for the gathering, the organizations submitted one-page reports about their programs and activities, which were collected and printed by Sister Jean Verber of the Sienna Center Earth Committee and made available to participants. Sister Janet Weyker of The Eco-Justice Center led the group in a process in which over 30 people gave one-minute reports about the mission and impact of their environmental organization or faith group so that we could learn about each other and do some networking. The purpose was to affirm that we can be more effective when we work together on common and complementary endeavors.

Dave Rhoads reminded the group of the principles of The Natural Step that they had learned in a GGR workshop held last April 7: provide conditions for people to meet their needs, especially the most vulnerable; minimize use of fossil fuels; avoid products that do not biodegrade; and protect land, air, and water. He urged each group to adopt these principles of sustainability and apply them to their organizations, their buildings, and their activities.

After a break for healthy refreshments, the participants formed four focus groups to begin a 50 minute reflection period on some collective actions that might be taken. The focus group on "Food" was led by Bob Beezat of Sustainable, Edible, Economic Development and Allison Thielen from the Eco-Justice Center. The group discussing "Water" was led by Todd Brennan of the Alliance for the Great Lakes. Melissa Kaprelian-Becker of Discover Racine facilitated the group working on "Native Plants and Land Use." Tom Rutkowski of the Sierra Club led the conversation on "Energy" and "Waste."

The morning ended with the announcement that Greening Greater Racine is partnering with Gateway Technical College to hold an Eco-Fest on Friday March 18 from 12 to 3 for schools and on Saturday March 19 from 9 to 1 for residents, their friends and families. All organizations present were encouraged to prepare an interactive display booth for participation in that spring event for the greater Racine community.

The written reports of the participating organizations, the notes from the four focus groups, and an invitation to participate in further conversations and events can be found at [www.greeninggreaterracine.weebly.com](http://www.greeninggreaterracine.weebly.com)