



special to the reporter-herald

Employees at The Neenan Company celebrate their participation in Climate Wise in their new pool car, a Subaru Forester, a vehicle that has 90 percent cleaner emissions than the average car. The company also has tripled its LEED accredited professionals and added a full-time sustainability coordinator position.

fort collins company gets

climate wise

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Kermit the Frog said "it's not easy being green," but if Miss Piggy had taken a few minutes to help him out, he might have found it easier than he thought.

Businesses in Fort Collins that strive to be green have a helping hand waiting for them through the city of Fort Collins Climate Wise program. Designed to help business reduce greenhouse gas emissions by promoting waste reduction, energy savings, alternative transportation and water conservation, Climate Wise is a free and voluntary program offered to any business or organization that has a Fort Collins address. In addition to being environmentally friendly, the program helps businesses save money.

"The whole point of joining Climate Wise is not to become green first before joining, but to join whenever you want to and we can help you become efficient," explains Kathy Collier, Climate Wise coordinator.

The birth of Climate Wise came out of the city of Fort Collins' desire to become more sustainable, according to Collier. In 1999, the City joined the international ICLEI — Local Government for Sustainability. Fort Collins adopted its Climate Wise model on the local level in 2001.

Initially, 13 industrial and manufacturing businesses began

on the net

Climate Wise offers ways for businesses to help the environment, while also providing cost savings. According to its 2008 annual report:

- Savings for partner businesses exceeded \$7.2 million in 2008.
- Partners reduced 100,511 tons of CO₂e in 2008, equivalent to a reduction of 1,260,000 round-trip vehicle trips between Fort Collins and Denver.
- Saved 4 billion gallons cumulative water reduction since 2000, equal to annual water use in 63,000 homes.
- Since 2000, electrical energy savings equal the annual energy use in 25,400 homes.
- Cumulative gas savings since 2000 equal the annual natural gas use of 9,300 homes.
- Material diverted from landfill by reduction, reuse or recycling since 2000 equals in weight to 6,000 Transfort city buses.

To find out more about Climate Wise, or to join the program, visit the Web site at www.fcgov.com/climatewise or call 221-8312.

the program, which has grown to almost 200 today, says Collier. The city offers free technical assessments on any commercial property or organization, from a one-person office or an HOA, to a large corporation.

The changes don't have to be dramatic.

"You can absolutely see a savings in your utility bills if you switch out antiquated lighting

and substitute high-efficiency lighting," Collier said.

Technical assessments are only part of the program. There are participatory requirements as well, including attending two to three Climate Wise meetings a year. Businesses that choose to get more involved can mentor other businesses, increase networking opportunities, and challenge employees to help move their place of employment forward in conservation efforts.

One of the earlier companies, The Neenan Company, has achieved platinum status in the program.

John Drigot, sustainability coordinator for The Neenan Company, shares that Climate Wise has helped the company with projects such as recycling, biking to work and decreasing travel mileage.

"For me, personally, the networking component of Climate Wise has helped me to better understand how to motivate and inspire our Green Team and keep everyone abreast in regards to the rapidly changing field of sustainability," says Drigot.

"There are plenty of Web sites and resources out there to communicate with over the phone or on the Web in regards to sustainability," says Drigot. "What we have here in Fort Collins, with the Climate Wise program, is a way to interact and support each other."