



PORTLAND
VAMC

FALL 2012

GEMS Newsletter



YOUR GEMS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

GEMS COORDINATOR

- Wendy Trapp

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

- Ronnie Smith, Chair
- Craig Carter

AFGE

- Leonard Fearn, 2157 Portland
- Jennifer Simonds, 2583 Vancouver

Computer Operations & Telecomm.

- Pete Dodge

Energy Manager

- Ron Higgins

Environmental Management

- Renee' Lange
- Carter Carlson

Facilities Management

- John Dodier

Fiscal

- Kristie Keever

Industrial Hygiene

- Jenika Schindlbeck

Infectious Disease (Ad Hoc)

- Sherri Atherton

Inpatient Services

- Diane Stief
- Robert Ham/
- Jenny Spiker
- Constance Matson

Logistics and Material Management

- Andrew Heithaus

Operative Care

- Kathleen Coleman
- Karie Galvin

Pathology & Laboratory Medicine

- Trish Aswani

Pharmacy

- Joe Brooks
- Angela Loo

Projects and Interior Design

- Melisse Kuhn

Research

- Heather Parman

A Message From the GEMS Coordinator

Another fiscal year has passed. Can you believe it? Time is quickly flying by and there is so much to do. The committee had a fantastic year, achieving many goals (see page 2) and already beginning to work on those for FY 2013. Some upcoming projects will involve beginning to tackle the growing problem of patient pharmacy waste. Also examining Omni cell usage and reduction of wasting supplies. We will also be looking at more construction project recycling, including station level projects and scrap metal. Finally we will be looking at tracking the usage of our new E-85 alternative fuel tank that was installed in Vancouver.

In addition, water shortages are occurring all around the country, and our facility as part of Executive Order 13514, is working

hard to reduce our usage by 2% each year since the 2007 baseline. Want to know how we are doing? Check out page 4 for an update from our energy manager.

Thanks to everyone for a very successful GEMS program as we continue to progress and make improvements every year. We are one of the VA's that are composting. We are one of few VA's that have a solid waste diversion rate of over 50%. Keep up the good work, and as always, let me know if you have new ideas that you want to share.

Wendy Trapp
GEMS Coordinator

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Have GEMS questions, contact
Wendy Trapp
Extension 55417



RECYCLING

Year End Report- How did we do?

- ◆ Disposed of approximately 10,644 of non-hazardous and 2,565 of hazardous pharmacy waste and kept them out of the landfills and waters.
- ◆ Achieved attendance rate of 80% for at least 20 members of the committee.
- ◆ Completed 100% of GEMS significant aspects and impacts to identify new environmental concerns in each department.
- ◆ Remained above 90% all year for GEMS Awareness training.
- ◆ Recycled 81,980 lbs of electronics in FY 2012.
- ◆ Generated \$6704.50 in recycling revenues for FY 2012.
- ◆ Recycled 11.1 ton of fluorescent lamps/bulbs.
- ◆ Recycled 315 tons of mixed paper.
- ◆ Recycled 92.8 tons of yard debris.
- ◆ Recycled 65.5 tons of comingled glass, metals and plastics.
- ◆ Recycled 28.5 tons of medical plastics.
- ◆ Composted 78.5 tons of food waste.



ICU Cart Design Saves Big \$\$\$!



Recently, the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) examined how much waste and recycling was leaving one patient room during a patient discharge. Some of the staff felt a need to see what could be done to save money, time, and waste. They had an idea to redesign stocking of the carts. A group of nurses looked at the old design to figure out what we did and didn't need and made a new sleeker list. After that we set up the carts drawers so stocking would be easier and did a rather large feedback and rollout phase to get as many staff on board as possible. There was a huge amount of push back—really it boiled down to a few noisy resisters. I believe we are at the tipping point but we could slide backwards if we don't keep on setting the example. It was a redesign of how we stocked the patient rooms' supply carts. A rough estimate of Portland VA Medical Center cost savings equates to a \$79,440 cost savings since the stocking methods have changed for the ICU. These numbers are huge and this is just the beginning of what the medical center can accomplish with this task.

Jenny Spiker-Critical Care Unit Clinical Nurse Leader

Fiscal Year 12 use represents a 25% decrease in water use from the base year 2007.

Water Conservation Data

Water use Portland VAMC

| | FY 07 | FY 08 | FY 09 | FY 10 | FY 11 | FY12 |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | <u>use in kgal</u> |
| Oct | 3247 | 3211 | 2521 | 2642 | 1950 | 2491 |
| Nov | 3570 | 2777 | 1560 | 2802 | 2219 | 2088 |
| Dec | 3132 | 1895 | 2235 | 1782 | 2275 | 2400 |
| Jan | 3125 | 3709 | 2988 | 2134 | 1678 | 1936 |
| Feb | 3101 | 2759 | 2804 | 2077 | 1989 | 2288 |
| Mar | 3283 | 2894 | 2924 | 2125 | 2541 | 2165 |
| Apr | 3226 | 2796 | 2568 | 2540 | 2451 | 2352 |
| May | 2908 | 5315 | 2321 | 2557 | 2080 | 2468 |
| Jun | 3498 | 2484 | 4782 | 2575 | 2758 | 2979 |
| Jul | 4596 | 3334 | 3572 | 3499 | 2877 | 4195 |
| Aug | 3741 | 3206 | 3929 | 2756 | 3261 | 3121 |
| Sep | 4845 | 4000 | 3261 | 5007 | 3506 | 3506 |
| annual use in kgal | 42272 | 38380 | 35465 | 32496 | 29585 | 31989 |

Saving water at work:

- ◆ Call the work order office at extension 56332 to report any leaks or water waste from bathrooms or kitchens.

Jenika Schindlbeck, Industrial Hygienist and Ron Higgins, Energy Manager

HOME WATER CONSERVATION

Water is an important resource that we might take for granted here in the Pacific Northwest; we average 42 inches of rainfall here in Portland, OR. But most of the global population lives in areas with very limited water resources that are readily available to them. It is important to conserve the water we have for future use. Below are some tips on how to save water:

- ◆ Repair drips and leaks!
- ◆ Put food coloring in your toilet tank, if it seeps into the toilet bowl without flushing, you have a leak. Toilet leaks can account for around 22 gallons per day!
- ◆ Make sure there are water-saving aerators on your faucets and shower heads.



Jenika Schindlbeck, Industrial Hygienist and Ron Higgins, Energy Manager



Trash Talk-At work even

1. Instead of emptying your office trash every day, why not wait until it is full? However, don't let food waste smell or attract pests.
2. Make sure to only use one plastic liner in trash bins.
3. Recycle for paper or plastic may not need a liner. Check with housekeeping.
4. Think about consolidating trash in one area, instead of bin at every desk. Work with your office.
5. Consider an office compost....must be emptied Everyday. And REUSE, REDUCE, and RECYCLE!

Kristie Kever, Fiscal

Sustainable Gardening-Creating a Healthy, Healing Environment.

It is widely known that gardening is a great tool for positive health and recovery for some .

Top 10 plants:



1. **Lemon/ Lime Tree** - when it comes to flavoring and preserving other foods, acidic limes are one of the best options you could grow. Plus, if you had a surplus you could always make lemonade or churn out your own marmalade.

2. **Apple Tree** - The beauty of an apple tree is that it produces abundantly and can easily be espaliered against a boundary fence to minimize space. A good apple tree can keep you in fruit for most of the cooler months.

3. **Peach / Nectarine Tree** - Summer Fruit. You could opt for a berry vine instead. Not into peaches or nectarines? Then you could choose from apricots, plums or even loquats.

4. **Cabbages** - a winter-growing vegetable. Cabbages are a great storing vegetable with a superb shelf-life. If you grow too much they can always be pickled and stored as sauerkraut.

5. **Tomatoes** - tomatoes are the best fruit/veg that the self-sustainable gardener could grow. Not only do they taste great during the summer months but you can easily produce enough to can, bottle or freeze for the cooler months.

6. **Potatoes** - the ultimate carbohydrate vegetable can be grown for at least nine months of the year and produce brilliant harvests. Potatoes, like cabbages, have a great shelf-life and provided they're kept in a cool, dry yet dark location should be able to keep you in stock for most of the year.

7. **Beans** - Beans are a great vegetable that lend themselves easily to being blanched and frozen for the winter months.

8. **Carrots** - the ultimate all-rounder vegetable that will grow as a continual crop. Carrots can be grown at any time but if your area is too cold to support them during winter then they can be blanched and frozen like beans.

9. **Lettuce** - while mostly considered as a summer vegetable, lettuce can also be grown indoors in a small hydroponic setup that gives you year-round supply.

10. **Onions** -Onions are a great option for the home self-sustainable garden. They store really well making them available in the off season and are great producers. Plus, like lemons, onions are a great flavoring for many dishes and are useful in pickling and preserving other vegetables.

References:

WebMD: <http://www.webmd.com/healthy-aging/features/gardening-health>

Sustainable Gardening: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_gardening

Travis Peake-Facilities Management Program Support

GEMS Tid Bits



Having a holiday party? Check out these “green” holiday tips

http://environment.about.com/od/greenthanksgiving/tp/ef_thanksgiving.htm

<http://www.grownyc.org/holidaytips/>

<http://www.planetmattersandmore.com/tag/how-to-throw-a-sustainable-holiday-party/>

Energy Conservation information or do you have old fridges and freezers at home?

Check this website out! <http://energytrust.org/residential/>



Angela Loo, Pharmacy and Andrew Heithaus, L&MM

Want some more green?
Visit the [GEMS Sharepoint!](#)