



PORTLAND  
VA MEDICAL CENTER

**YOUR GEMS  
COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

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- Ronnie Smith

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- Jennifer Simonds, 2583 Vancouver

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- Carter Carlson

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WINTER/SPRING 2012

# GEMS Newsletter



## *A Message From the GEMS Coordinator*

It seems like it has been a mild winter, but spring is on the horizon! Get out there and plant your flowers and gardens.

Our committee has been very busy with annual reporting, calculating waste minimization data, planning earth week and initiating the facility composting program. Yes! I said composting. Nutrition and Food service, as well as the VCS Canteen have begun composting food waste. See article on Page 4 for more information.

Also, check Page 3 for our upcoming earth week events as we have a lot going on this year from recycled art contests, to healthy food lunch and learns to the sustainability fair.

I also wanted to say Congratulations to the Operating Room and GEMS Committee team for winning, first place, Peoples Choice award in the

poster fair for their demonstration of pharmacy waste, "Don't Pollute the Waters," poster. Go team!

Keep on asking questions, and giving ideas as our committee is constantly working on recycling improvements, waste reduction strategies, and environmental compliance concerns.

Upcoming events include significant aspects beginning in April, so as you are contacted by the GEMS Committee to complete these requests, please get with them to ensure we are compliant with the ISO 14000.1 standards.

Thanks to all of you for the role you play to improve the environment in your work place!

Wendy Trapp  
GEMS Coordinator

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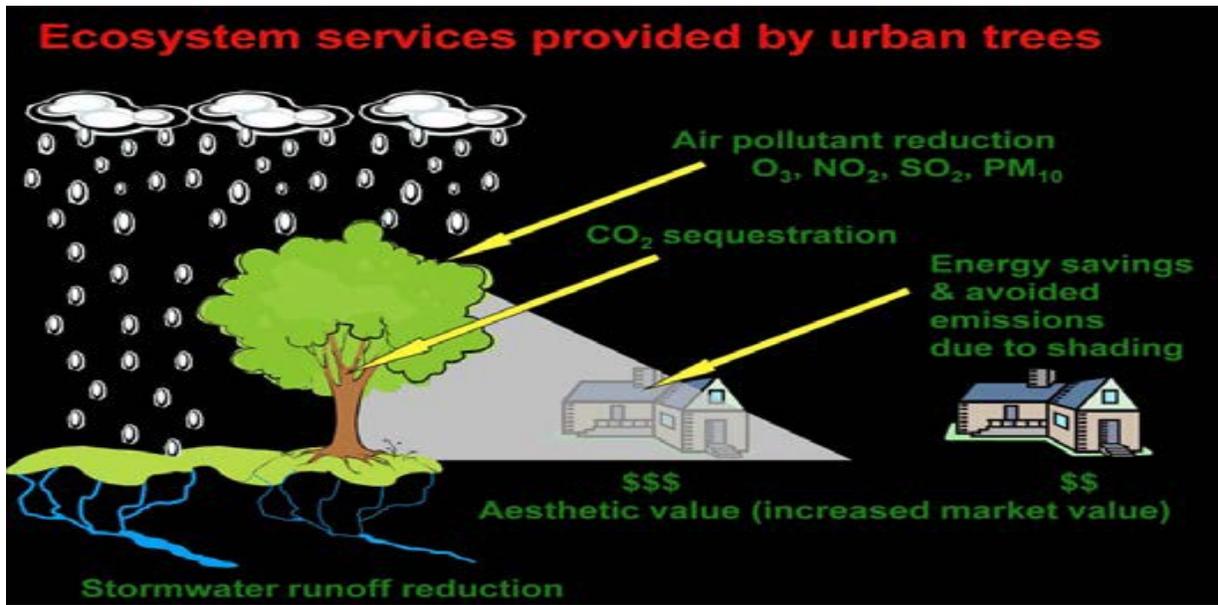
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If you are interested in becoming a GEMS Committee Member, please contact Wendy Trapp at ext.55417 or email



### Have You Hugged a Tree Lately?

An EPA-funded report entitled “Assessment of Eco-system Services Provided by Urban Trees: Public Lands Within the Urban Growth Boundary of Corvallis, Oregon,” Phillips, et al, 2011, provides in-sight into the tremendous value of trees. By reducing storm water runoff and air pollutants, sequestering carbon dioxide, saving energy, and improving aesthetics, trees provide us with economic, health, and emotional benefits.

[http://www.itreetools.org/resources/reports/Corvallis Urban Tree Assessment Tech Report.pdf](http://www.itreetools.org/resources/reports/Corvallis%20Urban%20Tree%20Assessment%20Tech%20Report.pdf)

*Hug a tree and let it know how much you appreciate what it does for you.*

### POWER OUTAGE LIGHTING

A friend used her solar lights inside at night when the power went out during a hurricane. She stuck them in a jar or bottle and said they gave off plenty of ‘free light’. She put one in each room and would put them back outside in the day time and bring them in at night as long as the current was off. They are safe to use and cheaper than batteries. What a great idea!



## ***A Zero-Waste Home: Is it possible?***

In an environment filled with consumer driven products, made primarily of plastic, is it possible to have a home with zero-waste?



The answer, yes. After doing research on the possibilities of completely eliminating waste, I ran into an article found in Sunset Magazine, about a family in Northern California that throws next to nothing away. I could

not believe it and was completely intrigued and confused at how this was even possible.

(<http://www.sunset.com/home/natural-home/zero-waste-home-0111-00418000069984/>).

The Johnson family is a married couple, with two children and one dog. In one year's time, they throw away a few small handfuls of non-recyclable waste each year, that may equate to one pound. These scraps consist mainly of wrappers from contact lens cleaner or packaging that comes on things they can't live without, like home repair supplies. The average person throws away 1,130 pounds of waste each year. With helpful tricks like composting, recycling, buying local, reusing your own bags and containers and not purchasing unnecessary waste (packaging and processed foods), you too can develop a similar lifestyle and decrease the number of pounds you throw away each year.

I read through the article (listed above) as something to work toward in my own home and I found it's entirely possible and actually very easy! I have not reached a small handful of waste, but aspire to get there someday. This article made me conscious of things I bought, used, and threw

away. I've stopped purchasing packaging to the best of my ability (and in return, started eating a more natural and healthy diet) and have been bringing glass, reusable containers and bags to the grocery store for everything from brown rice to face wash. Several stores in Portland do this, you should ask your grocer if they allow you to bring in your own containers.

With 31 million tons of plastic waste each year in the United States and only 8% of that recycled, it's critical that we as consumers start taking a look at what we are purchasing. In 2010, plastic bags sacks and wraps consisted of 12%. For further reading on the facts and ways to reduce waste, visit <http://www.epa.gov/osw/consERVE/materials/plastics.htm>.

The Johnsons purchase only recyclable materials and has a very minimalist lifestyle with a sofa, video player, TV and blanket in their living room and a thrift store clothing in the closet. This may be an extreme change for many, but the bottom line is watching what you purchase, consume and throw away.



I strongly suggest adopting some of these same methods of living as it will only positively impact your lifestyle, budget, environment and health.

*Written by Kristie Keever  
DSS TCF Intern, PVAMC*

## *Earth Week Schedule*

***Monday, April 16th—Atrium***

10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.  
 GEMS Tables  
 Spinning Wheel to Win Prizes  
 Pop Corn  
 Pollution Prevention Survey  
 Cell Phones for Soldiers  
 Re-use a Shoe Program



***Tuesday, April 17th—Sky Walk***

10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.  
 Recycled Art Contest

***Tuesday, April 17th—Bldg. 101, Room 433***

12:00—1:00 p.m.  
 Recycled Art Workshop

***Wednesday, April 18th—Sky Walk***

11:00 a.m.—12:30 p.m.  
 Office Swap

***Thursday, April 19th—Sky Bridge***

11:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.  
 Waste Reduction Fair\*  
 Pollution Prevention Survey

***Thursday, April 19th—Vancouver Campus  
 Columbia Room***

C-Tran  
 Office Swap  
 Re-use a Shoe Program  
 Cell Phones for Soldiers

\*Potential Vendors: OHSU Farmers Market, Master Recycler, Waste Management, Master Gardener, Marquam Hill Nature Park, Oregon Department of Energy, SOLV, Earthshare, Zip Car, Rebuilding Center, Free Geek, Proud Ground, Community Energy Project, Energy Trust of Oregon, City of Portland Bureau of Planning (Green Building and Solar Energy Programs), and City of Portland Environmental Services (Ecoroofs and Rain Barrels), PGE, Backyard Habitat.

# Composting

Yes! Our campus has begun composting. It has taken several years to get this program off and running, but Nutrition and Food Service and the Canteen are composting. All patient foods that come back from inpatient settings will be composted. In the canteen, all pre-consumer, kitchen prep waste will go into the composting bins. The Canteen is considering expanding this program to post consumers, or customers, but we want to begin with the kitchen and move forward from there. We are looking at generating 500-600 pounds a day. This will be a tremendous improvement to meet the goals of the executive order and divert waste out of the landfills. And, reduce costs in trash and hauling. Stay tuned for more specific data to be reported, once the program has been going for a while. Thanks to everyone who has worked on this project and for their willingness to be flexible and recognize the importance of this food waste program.



**Where does the compost go?** To a facility in North Plains, OR.

**What can you compost?** Some BPI certified compostable bags and containers, waxed paper and cardboard, kitchen paper towels and all food, including; meat, , bones, fish, poultry, breads, and of course fruits and veggies.



**GEMS MEMBER:****KATHLEEN COLEMAN, R.N.**

Hi, my name is Kathy Coleman and I have been an R.N. in the O.R. since July 2006 when I was hired on at the PVAMC. I have been a member of the GEMS committee since October 2009; I got fed up with the fact that the OR's recycling program had been suspended. I worked with Wendy and Carter to restart the recycling program in the OR. I have always been passionate about good earth stewardship and at almost every job I had previous to becoming a nurse, I spear-

headed or streamlined recycling programs at my place of employment.

I am proud to be a member of the GEMS committee because of the good work that the committee does and I look forward to many years of service to this committee.

Want some more green?

Visit the

[GEMS Sharepoint!](#)

***Friends of Terwilliger—Volunteer Opportunities***

Friends of Terwilliger hold monthly work parties on the 2nd Saturday of the month, from 9 a.m.—12 p.m. They meet at the bathrooms on the corner of SW Terwilliger and SW Hamilton. Currently they are focusing on removing ivy and clematis along the Parkway in preparation for the Centennial.

Upcoming dates:      ∞      April 14  
                                  ∞      May 12  
                                  ∞      June 9



For more information, contact Robin Vesey  
 at 503-293-1069 or email [jack-robin@spiritone.com](mailto:jack-robin@spiritone.com).