



**P O R T L A N D**

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**GEMS COORDINATOR**

- Wendy Trapp

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- Ronnie Smith

**AFGE**

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- Denise Lieb, 2583 Vancouver

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- Sherri Atherton

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- Lisa Hawes
- Lynn Riley

**Education Specialist**

- Dan Koperski

**Operative Care**

- Kathleen Coleman
- Kari Galvin

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- Eric Gladwin

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- Joe Brooks
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- Denise LaLande

**Research**

- Heather Parman
- Will Beckman

**Safety Program Support**

- Sue Gardner

**Safety Specialist**

- Maggie Turner

WINTER 2011

# GEMS Newsletter



## *A Message From the GEMS Coordinator*

Happy New Year everyone! With the start of 2011 the GEMS committee wanted to thank the medical center for all of the efforts that they put in to making the GEMS program succeed. We couldn't do it without the ideas, the recycling champions, the dedication, and all the pieces that come together to complete the puzzle.

This issue is dedicated to providing education on various topics within the medical center and provide feedback on how much waste is being diverted out of the landfills.

Each bottle, cardboard box, and can thrown into the recycling does matter. It may not seem like turning out that light, or reducing water usage is a big deal, but out of 5000+ employees, those personal choices can add up to big savings.

Other things to think about when "going green," is to purchase recycled and bio-based products, buying only what items you need, using less toxic chemicals, bringing re-usable silverware for lunch, and thinking before printing out that e-mail. Making green choices provides a more sustainable campus, allowing for a healthier, positive environment to provide to our Veterans, and makes you feel good too!

Thanks to each and everyone for your contributions, and determination to make environmental practices prevalent in your daily routine.

Wendy Trapp, GEMS Coordinator

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If you are interested in becoming a GEMS Committee Member, please contact Wendy Trapp at ext.55417 or email: wendy.trapp@va.gov



## RECYCLING AT PVAMC 2010

### How did we do?

**PAPER** - 844,000 lbs recycled FY 2010; 699,990 lbs recycled FY 2009

**BATTERIES** - 6,918 lbs batteries recycled FY 2010; 2,448 lbs FY 2009

**METAL** - 198,000 lbs recycled FY 2010; 156,000 lbs recycled FY 2009

**GLASS** - 13,000 lbs recycled FY 2010; 6,059 lbs recycled FY 2009

**CARDBOARD** - 290,000 lbs recycled FY 2010; 276,760 lbs recycled FY 2009

**CARTRIDGES** - 1,000 lbs of cartridges recycled FY 2010; 2,500 lbs in FY 2009

**PLASTIC** - 156,000 lbs recycled FY 2010; 1,000 lbs FY 2009

**OIL** - 7,000 lbs recycled FY 2010; 9,240 lbs FY 2009

**BIO-HAZARDOUS WASTE** - 409,703 lbs collected FY 2010; 492,000 lbs FY 2009

**TIRES** - 32 tires recycled FY 2010; 544 tires FY 2009

**YARD DEBRIS COMPOSTING** - 312,000 lbs composted FY 2010; 90,843 lbs FY 2009

**COMINGLED PAPER/PLASTIC/CANS – VANCOUVER SITE** - 415,000 lbs in FY 2010

**TEXTILES** - 5,139 lbs recycled FY 2010; 6,212 lbs FY 2009

**CONSTRUCTION DEBRIS** - 147,000 lbs recycled FY 2010; 10,000 lbs FY 2009

**STYROFOAM** - 2,000 lbs recycled FY 2010; 2,880 lbs FY 2009

**MEDICAL PLASTICS (including Blue Wraps) new vendor started 8/2010** - 47,000 lbs recycled FY 2010; 65,000 lbs FY 2009

**ELECTRONICS** - 90,000 lbs recycled, 40,000 lbs donated for re-use FY 2010

13,369 lbs recycled, 11,821 lbs donated for re-use FY 2009

**OFFICE SUPPLIES** - 300 lbs FY 2010; 600 lbs for 2009

**ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION** - 1,010 employees use bus/vanpool and 634 employees in carpools

**SOLVENTS** - 163 gallons of xylene and 108 gallons of alcohol recycled in 2010

-170 gallons of xylene and 118 gallons of alcohol recycled in 2009

**LEAD** - 2,200 lbs recycled FY 2010

**DENTAL SCRAP** - 24 lbs recycled FY 2010

**X-RAY FILM** - 1,000 lbs recycled for silver recovery in FY 2010

## EMPLOYEE/VISITOR RECYCLING



**CELL PHONES** - 57 cell phones recycling during 2010 Earth Week event; 105 during 2009 event

**NIKE SHOES** - 66 pair of shoes recycled during 2010 Earth Week event; 218 during 2009 event

**HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE** - Over 1,000 lbs collected during 2008 event with OHSU

**ENVIRONMENTAL PLEDGES/TIPS** - 21 environmental tips given during Earth Week 2010 event  
78 pledges during Earth Week 2009 event

**PAPER SHREDED** - Approximately 600 lbs shredded during 2010 Earth Week event; 400 lbs 2009 event

**ELECTRONICS** - 3,300 lbs collected for recycling during the 2010 Earth Week event

## ENERGY CONSERVATION AT PVAMC



### ELECTRICITY

6/1% decrease in electricity use in Portland in FY 2010 from FY 2009, savings of \$137,049

4.3% increase in electricity use in Portland in FY 2009 from FY 2008

### NATURAL GAS

1.7% decrease in Natural Gas use in Portland in FY 2010 from FY 2009, savings of \$430,575

### WATER

8.4% reduction in water use in Portland between FY2010 and FY 2009

### SOLID WASTE

Reduced 392 tons solid waste disposal in FY 2010 from FY 2009

Reduced 800 tons solid waste disposal in FY 2009 from FY 2008

### HAZARDOUS WASTE

Increased 3,611 lbs hazardous waste disposal in FY 2010 from FY 2009

(Began collecting pharmacy waste for hazardous waste disposal 6/2010)

Reduced 2,802 lbs hazardous waste disposal in FY 2009 from FY 2008



## Most Frequently Asked GEMS Questions



**What is GEMS?** Green Environmental Management System, an integrated framework that combines all environmental components into one program e.g. recycling, green purchasing, chemical management, permits, water, air, waste reduction, and compliance.

**How can I get more involved or learn about GEMS?** This newsletter, GEMS website (see link on the last page of this letter), participate in Earth Day events, take the GEMS training on LMS, and send ideas and questions to the GEMS Coordinator, [wendy.trapp@va.gov](mailto:wendy.trapp@va.gov).

**Do we recycle Styrofoam?** Yes, but we are not able to have bins all over the hospital. You need to take it out back to the dumpster behind the energy center for disposal.

**Do we recycle cans?** We currently have limited recycling for cans, but hope to improve this process and availability of containers in 2011.

**Why don't we have recycling containers in common areas?** Logistically, having recycling containers in common areas, like the lobby, elevators etc, are hard to manage. Often, the wrong items end up in the recycling and staff do not have the time to sort through it. The facility is trying to improve this process, but right now it has been best having containers in individual departments and identifying champions to help manage them.

**Why isn't the canteen more green?** The canteen is working on making vast improvements and central office has hired a national sustainability coordinator specific for the canteen. See "Greening the Canteen" article on page 6 for more info.

**What are environmental aspects and impacts?** Environmental aspects and impacts are anything that could potentially affect the environment. Each year, by executive order, the GEMS committee has to visit each department and examine what those areas might be doing that could affect the environment. As new impacts/aspects are identified, the GEMS committee helps that particular area find a "greener" solution if possible.

## GEMS Tidbits

**GEMS Training:** Don't forget to complete your GEMS training. LMS has a new GEMS module. All employees are required to take GEMS training each year. Please go to the LMS website and log in to take your GEMS training now.

**Want to know your carbon footprint?** Oregon DEQ, now has a website that you can calculate your carbon footprint and offers suggestions for improvements. Check it out!

<http://www.deq.state.or.us/programs/sustainability/carboncalculator.htm>

**Bio-based products– Coming this spring!** US Department of Agriculture (USDA) will be having a bio based label on qualifying products in the store. Check out this website for more information.

<http://www.biopreferred.gov/Labeling.aspx>



### *Getting to know your GEMS Committee Members!*

Dan Koperski, Education Specialist



Dan started with the Portland VA Medical Center in March of 2008 with Medical Media, Education Division where he managed the audio visual equipment and Closed Circuit TV systems for the facility as well as provided design and marketing support to various committees and departments at the Portland VA Medical Center. He has also worked over the past year and a half as a LMS administrator, updating the online learning content for the facility. Dan has been a member of the GEMS committee since 2010 and continually works towards going green within his workplace and personal life. Dan has over 12 years of experience working in the local graphic design and internet industries where he has been an active participant in a number of national and regional sustainable practice conferences and initiatives. These initiatives involve changing large and small scale printing practices (use of recycled materials), design directives towards sustainable media (earth friendly materials) and green energy integration in large-scale facilities and infrastructures. Dan continually strives towards green living by actively recycling and composting at home, commuting on the bus and owning a high-efficiency bio-diesel car (Jetta TDI). Dan's official duties with the GEMS committee include marketing and online/web support.

# Greening the Canteen



By Jack Hamacek  
Chief, Patriot Services



While we may be in the second calendar month of 2011, the Patriot Services (our new name), just finished fiscal year 2010 on January 29<sup>th</sup>. So as we begin our new year let's take a moment to look at a few highlights from 2010.

Most noticeable might be the face lift to the Patriot Café on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Portland Medical Center. If you have been paying attention you saw a slow transformation from a dated, poorly lit facility to an updated, bright, and quieter environment. Hats off to the design team of John Carrier, Melisse Kuhn and Diane Encarnacao for their vision and support to our Veterans.

And with the transformation came improved sustainability opportunities.

The new flooring is a vinyl composite that can be maintained with a clear water wash. There is no need for chemical cleaners and extra points for being a no wax product. Notice too, it is a much a friendlier surface to navigate by our wheelchair customers than the old tile.

The ceiling tiles are twice the bonus; 73% recycled materials are used and the design has made for a noticeable reduction in noise pollution. The lighting is also a big improvement; all new, cool burning, energy efficient lighting just to brighten your day.

Although not necessarily obvious, new equipment was installed. Okay, the new salad bar is pretty obvious, but we also received new deep fryers, hot serving line. and two new deli/salad cases that are far more energy efficient than the units they replaced.

Seen any Styrofoam lately? We have gotten rid of most of our Styrofoam and opted for a more earth friendly product for our to-go containers. These by themselves will not save the planet because there is still more recycling to be done, to keep items out of the landfills. Did I mention the new plastic bags we use are made from 25% recycled material?

Composting is coming! Composting is coming! We are working with the GEMS Committee to incorporate composting in 2011. Stay tuned for more information.

Yes! We recycled 600 gallons of trans fat free cooking oil last year.

So, we are not completely green, but have been working very hard to make a more sustainable environment for our customers. Stay tuned for a similar face lift to the Patriot Store later this year.

## GEMS Awards 2010



The following employees received GEMS Environmental Stewardship Awards in 2010.

- \***Anthony Owsain, John Doyle and Al Wimmer** for system to convert expired AED pads to training pads
- \***Eddie McCuff** for script and development of Bio-man video
- \***Jim Burget** for environmental landscaping practices qualifying for City of Portland's certification Eco-Logical Business in Landscape Services
- \***Jesse Pogodzinski** for coffee cart recycling program setup
- \***Jennifer Spiker, Rebecca Fero** for pharmaceutical waste segregation program development, setup and training
- \***Terry Finley** for medical plastics recycling program in the OR
- \***Leilani Bradley** for plastic recycling system in Dermatology

*Thanks again to these and all employees' efforts to reduce the PVAMC's environmental impact.*

*Congratulations!*

On behalf of the

*GEMS Committee*

Want some more green? Visit the GEMS website!

<http://vaww.portland.med.va.gov/Departments/CNE/fmsd/GEMS/Index.htm>