



Local Earth Advocates & Friends

December 2009

Metro East LEAF is an all-volunteer, civic oriented group. Our mission is to educate our community about environmental issues, to provide a forum for discussion and seeking small-scale local solutions, and to build coalitions of local groups and individuals towards these aims. LEAF is open to all residents of the Metro East area. Our monthly meetings are typically held the first Wednesday of each month at the Belleville downtown public library.

Next Monthly Meeting Date
January 6, 2010

GREEN TIP

Did you know that drafts waste between 5-30% of your household energy? You can save up to \$20 through the winter per large window by installing a window insulation kit. An even cheaper way, although less attractive, is using bubble wrap on your windows. This is a perfect option for basement windows. Lightly spray your windows with water and cut the bubble wrap to fit. Gently press the bubble wrap onto the window-- no need for tape or glue. It can cut heat loss up to half!

Time to Plan for Spring Events

It is now time to start planning for our Spring Activities. Last year we participated in the St. Patrick's Day Parade and an Earth Hour Awareness Campaign. During this month's membership meeting, the group voiced support for possibly organizing an Earth Week and pairing up with like-minded groups, City of Belleville, local businesses and organizations. Many great ideas were generated. We will need to start putting feelers out to see what is possible and create a plan of action. We encourage you to email your ideas along with possible partners. Watch out for planning dates, as we will need your time and talents to make this happen! To get involved or pass along ideas, email Amy Funk at amymkfunk@yahoo.com

For more information, visit us at
www.metroeastleaf.org

350

By Steve Kielbasa

Recently, noted writer, environmentalist, and educator Bill McKibben spent an evening in Lebanon at McKendree University as part of their Distinguished Speaker Series. His presentation focused on arguably the most prominent danger now facing our planet - global warming. While McKibben could have gone into the scientific specifics about climate change, he wanted to focus on our responsibilities as members of the global community and share his experience with organizing a global movement to prevent global warming - a daunting challenge which McKibben jokingly alluded to. "Creating momentum for a global climate change movement is especially difficult for lots of reasons, but mostly because everyone insists on speaking their own language." To build this movement McKibben needed a simple idea, which all people could understand and rally around and that could cut across cultural divides and language differences. That idea would be the number 350.

What does the number 350 mean to you? Now, I studied engineering years ago, and I can still rattle off many of the most ubiquitous numbers I used in my science classes. Standard gravitational acceleration is 9.81 m/sec². Avogadro's number is 6.022×10^{23} . I know that there are 50 stars on our nation's flag and it takes 3 licks to get to the center of a Tootsie-Pop. But 350? Sorry, doesn't ring a bell. Well, it turns out that this number may very well be the most important number that you don't know. The atmosphere of our planet is filled various gases including carbon dioxide (CO₂), which is a major contributing factor to global warming. 350 refers to the amount of CO₂, in parts per million (ppm), that climate scientists chose as the data point denoting the safe upper limit which CO₂ concentrations can reach. Beyond that point, it is believed that the effects of global warming start to take an unnatural course resulting in Arctic ice melting at an accelerated rate and emerging signs of global climate change. Scientists are especially concerned that given our history and continued use of fossil fuels we have pushed current CO₂ concentrations to 390 ppm and rising.

Bill McKibbin's effort to start a global grassroots movement began at Middlebury College in Vermont where he is a scholar in residence. With a handful of students he had organized awareness rallies in Vermont and again nationally. At the beginning in 2008, McKibbin admits having no idea how to even start such a movement but "we just picked up the phone and started calling everyone we knew." Fast-forward a year later and on October 24, 2009, people in 181 countries at over 5,200 events gathered in a call for action to find solutions to the climate crisis.



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Local Food Co-op Experience Peg Rombach

I participated in the Community Helpings Food Co-op for Dec. 2. Their primary focus is fruits and vegetables, with "extras" of nuts, eggs, coffee (free-trade!), and other items available on a bi-monthly basis. This is not a subscription Co-op. You can buy in as often or seldom as you wish, deliveries are twice a month. The basic basket this past month was \$23.00. Price may fluctuate from month to month. You can order through the website, opting to mail check payment or pay through paypal. The next delivery is Dec. 15, 9:00 A.M. for Fairview Heights, at the big pavilion in Moody/Longacre Park, and 5:30 P.M. in Shiloh, at Shiloh community park next to the water tower on Siebert Rd.

For \$23.00, the basket on the day I participated included: Vegetables: 2 onions, 1 eggplant, 4 large carrots, 3 bunches broccoli, 2 zucchini, 1 yellow squash, 1 bunch collard greens, brussels sprouts, sun-dried tomatoes, 3 cucumbers, 5 green peppers, 5 pounds potatoes, 2 bulbs garlic, 1 package mushrooms Fruit: 5 oranges, 5 bananas, 1 bag red grapes, 1 cantaloupe, 2 apples, 4 lemons, 5 bosch pears.

Everything we've eaten so far has been delicious. The only drawback I see from this co-op is the challenge of cooking and storing such an abundance of fresh produce. However, you are able to purchase a HALF basket, and the volunteers try to get at least one of each item into these baskets. The produce is not organic. I spoke at length with the organizer about the logistics of having a similar organic foods co-op, and will present this information at a future meeting.

The Co-op requires some volunteer help (though not every week that you order). Michelle and I helped out the day we collected our baskets and it did not take long. The nicest thing about the Co-op: Every month they adopt a family or group in need, solicit donations of household items/ kids' clothes/ cash for food, and gift these people. This month's Fairview Heights recipients are the SAVE Group Homes; Shiloh recipients are the co-op's truck driver, and his family of 8 children.

For more information, you can contact them directly.
Katherine Reel for Shiloh
thereelgourmet@gmail.com

Dina Volkman for Fairview Heights
dina@communityhelpingscoop.com

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While invigorated by the strong showing of support at 350 rallies, McKibbin noted that the political will of many world leaders is sorely lacking. Solutions to the climate crisis are needed quickly and will require a drastic change in where we get our energy, yet politicians, including those in the United States, drag their feet on legislating serious and effective ways to address issue. McKibbin plainly stated that corporate and special-interest influences have corrupted the solution process. "...Exxon made billions of dollars in profit...[the movement] will never have that kind of money, but what we do have is the power of the people." And so the movement continues.

I found McKibbin to be an engaging, no-nonsense individual who takes the climate crisis seriously. Despite the ominous cloud of climate change that looms, it was refreshing to know that there are people not only locally, but also globally, who see the danger that is attached to our current fossil-fueled energy system. If enough people can demand change, our politicians will listen. So I will add one more item to the number soup that floats in my head--350. 350 for a cleaner, healthier planet. 350 for a better future. 350 for generations to come.

Visit online at <www.350.org> to see pictures of events around the world and get more information about 350 and its significance.



Pegs contents from the Community Helpings Food Co-op Basket. Please note, the produce is not organic.



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County Addresses Active & Healthy Living Janet Billhartz

I recently attended St. Clair County's 2009 Health Policy Summit entitled: Striving to Make a Difference: Active Living & Healthy Eating Through Community Partnership. Government, business and civic leaders joined with interested citizens to learn and discuss how to create opportunities for a more active and healthy community. Leading the summit was guest speaker Mark Fenton. One significant message of his presentation was that "We do not have an obesity epidemic—we have an inactivity epidemic." In an attempt to address this epidemic, the summit highlighted grassroots and government efforts to improve and encourage the use of whole foods, fruits and vegetables, in the schools and throughout the community.

The forum highlighted the need to give children and adults the opportunities to move around their communities by providing good sidewalks and bike paths. In rough, rounded, proportional numbers, "4" provides an important example of the problem. There are 4,000 deaths in the U.S. from pedestrian accidents; 40,000 deaths from car accidents, and 400,000 from sedentary living. Communities could become more vibrant if people could move around, shop, meet and greet each other along bike and footpaths. Some U.S. communities park their school buses a quarter mile from school so children can walk the remaining distance, as this may be the largest portion of physical activity they get in a day.

At the end of the summit, each municipality brainstormed and created a plan to move forward with their project. However, we can't leave the responsibility for our health in the hands and hearts of our elected officials. All of us must be proactive and contribute to these efforts—they need our support. In conclusion and even more importantly, we know that walking and biking, instead of driving our cars, increases not only our health, but also the health of our planet.

Girls Scout's Environmental Day

March 6th, 2010

The River Bluffs Girl Scout Association is having an Environmental Day March 6, 2010; the event will take place at SWIC from 10-2. They would like LEAF to participate, and present on ways to go green. If you have ideas on activities/presentations that would be appropriate for children between 9-13 years of age, please contact Amy Funk at 215-2011 or amymkfunk@yahoo.com.

Winter Vegetable Chili (Vegan) Submitted by Bonnie Warner

4 teaspoons olive oil
1 medium-size butternut squash, peeled and cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ inch cubes
2 medium-size carrots, diced
1 medium-size onion, diced
3 tablespoons chili powder
1 28-ounce can plum tomatoes
1 4-ounce can chopped mild green chiles
1 cup vegetable broth
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
2 15-ounce cans black beans, rinsed and drained (or a combo of beans you like)
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped fresh cilantro

In 5 quart Dutch oven (or just a large pot) over medium-high heat, heat 2 teaspoons olive oil. Add butternut squash and cook, stirring occasionally until golden; remove.

Then heat 2 more teaspoons olive oil; cook carrots and onion until well browned. Stir in chili powder; cook 1 minute, stirring.

Add tomatoes with their liquid, chilies with their liquid, vegetable broth and salt; over high heat, heat to boiling.

Reduce heat to low; cover and simmer 30 minutes, stirring occasionally with spoon to break up tomatoes.

Stir in black beans and butternut squash; over high heat, heat to boiling. Reduce heat to low; cover and simmer 15 – 20 minutes or until squash is tender and chili thickens. Stir in cilantro. Makes 6 main-dish servings.

RECYCLING

Lady of the Snows Shrine has a recycling service in the parking lot at the visitor's center. They take the following items:
Cardboard, phonebooks, all plastics, aluminum, steel cans, newspapers, magazines, and office papers.

If you have questions you can call 314-381-3700



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Sustainable Agriculture Janet Billhartz

The Harris World Ecology Center of Univ of Missouri-St. Louis, hosted a Conservation Forum, entitled Sustainable Agriculture: From Field to Market, on Thursday, Nov 12th. Among the panelists were professors from University of Arkansas and University of Michigan, delivering the message that we must be far-sighted and seek long-term productivity while conserving the Earth's ecosystem. There are great challenges to our Agricultural Land--Besides providing profitable food, and in more recent years biofuels, it's necessary the land remain sustainable for future generations. Biodiversity helps to conserve soil and water by preserving habitat for the predators and pollinators (birds & bees). Improving marginal land by converting to native vegetation (and harvesting only occasionally for fuel) leaves ground that stores carbon. Two other speakers represented the other end of the spectrum: an Exec VP of Bunge North America and the CEO of the National Corn Growers Association. They stated a heavy obligation to feed the world--and the use of chemicals and modern science are their main weapons against starvation in an overpopulated world. Dr. Marquis, the Scientific Director of the Center, emphasized that agricultural sustainability has a complexity of issues. Growers/citizens must meet the challenge of increasing human population without decreasing the integrity of managed and natural systems. And certainly we must be prepared for known and unknown impacts of climate change. That's something we can all agree on. (Note: Earth population today is 6.8B; projected population by 2050 is 9.4B).

Do you have a story to share?

We welcome newsletter submissions that pertain to environment and health. Submissions can be sent to Amy Funk at amymkfunk@yahoo.com or you can call at 618-215-2011.

Also, we are looking for a newsletter editor. If you are interested please contact Amy Funk.

Thanks to all those that contributed to the content of this newsletter!

Adopt A Topic

We are introducing a new feature of our meetings: "Adopt a Topic"

LEAF members can choose to "adopt" a topic—do a little research, put it into action in their own life (or better yet, if it's something you've already done, you can share your past experience), and then choose a month in the next year, to give a short presentation to the group. No doubt there are many possibilities—If time permits, we may even be able to address two topics per meeting. Please email us your topic idea and preferred month. If you are not comfortable taking on a topic but would like something specific addressed, email it to us, as another member might be interested in taking it on. During our November meeting, Joan Davis addressed public transit in the Metro-East.

Topic

Using the Library's Power Meter –Peg
Building A Worm Bin--Amy
A Vegan Lifestyle--Bonnie

Additional Topic Ideas

Inflating car tires for gas efficiency
What appliances use the most energy
Power Smart pricing with Ameren
Taking a room in your house "offgrid"
Non-electric kitchen appliances
Making your frig the most efficient
Landscape planting for energy savings
Local sources of seasonal produce
How to winterize windows and doors
Low cost draft-reducing projects
How to set ceiling fans for winter use
How to keep warm in a power outage

Visit us at www.metroeastleaf.org