

Case Study: Less Waste Challenge - Recycling**Summary**

Environmental degradation of the St. Croix River prompted community leaders of its border communities to come together to address the issue and resolve to improve river health by improving operations in their respective organizations.

Hudson Hospital & Clinic successfully implemented a paper use reduction initiative and enhanced recycling program, which became a building block to ongoing organizational performance improvement.

Since 2010, Hudson Hospital and Clinic achieved a median recycling rate of 37.60 percent of total hospital waste (HHI goal: 15 percent).

Hudson Hospital & Clinic

Hudson, Wisconsin

A HealthPartners Hospital

The Problem

The St. Croix River, a national scenic waterway and state boundary of Wisconsin and Minnesota, was in trouble. Environmental runoff and development were degrading water quality and disrupting natural ecosystems¹. In coordination with other community leaders, Hudson Hospital & Clinic responded by passing a board of directors resolution that pledged to decrease the amount of waste generated by the hospital, including implementing enhanced recycling programs.

The Strategy Selected

Leaders from Hudson Hospital recognized the role of the hospital as a valuable community asset, and aligned their sustainability work with the mission of the hospital, improving community health. Additionally, incorporating sustainability into the organizational culture of the hospital was a reflection and alignment with the community values regarding sustainability. In 2009, the hospital leaders created the first “green team” at the hospital. Together the team (see Fig. 1) established a formal set of goals, including an enhanced recycling program and intense paper-reduction initiatives throughout the hospital. Using the resources of Practice Greenhealth and the Healthier Hospitals Initiative (HHI) to guide their planning, implementation and evaluation of these programs, a process was created which became the basis for later capturing additional recyclable materials such as sterilization wrap (blue wrap), plastics, aluminum, tin, paperboard, pallets, and cardboard.

Implementation Process

The team met with managers and staff of the housekeeping, surgery center, procedure center and facilities/maintenance departments regarding how best to capture the recyclable materials, as well as identify key locations for receptacles and collection processes that worked with employee work flow and facility design. Employees were accountable for disposing of materials properly, including protected health information, biohazardous and landfill waste streams. To evaluate the recycling program, the team used data tracking tools of Practice Greenhealth and HHI, and conducted regular audits of the contents of the various waste streams to inform and support ongoing performance improvement.

About HealthPartners Hudson Hospital & Clinic

HealthPartners Hudson Hospital & Clinic is a 25-bed general medical and surgical critical access hospital in Hudson, WI, 20 miles east of Minneapolis/St. Paul. Survey data for the latest year available shows that 11,003 patients visited the hospital's emergency center. The hospital had a total of 1,654 admissions. Its physicians performed 382 inpatient and 1,396 outpatient surgeries².



Ann Ripley, Mike Mader, Sally Harris, Dana Slade accepting a 2014 Practice Greenhealth Circles of Excellence Award.



From left to right: Patty Schank, Sally Harris, Jean Weiler, Ann Ripley, Jennifer Moebius, Mike Mader, Kim Kiel, Dana Slade, Lisa Everson, Sarah Stockman.

Benefits

- \$21,000 in cost savings, \$500 in cost avoidance from single-use device reprocessing program.
- Since 2010, achieved a median recycling rate of 37.60 percent of total hospital waste (HHI goal: 15 percent).
- Since 2010, reduced regulated medical waste to a median 4.21 percent of total hospital waste (HHI goal: 10 percent).
- Diverted 50-100 tons of demolition debris from area landfill.
- Listed in national [Top 20 Critical Access Hospitals](#).

Challenges and Lessons Learned

As is the case with many hospitals, the team was challenged with the mechanical barrier of limited square footage and the space needed to accommodate multiple receptacles. Pairing up environmental services staff with clinical staff, solutions were found and implemented, and relationships were strengthened. The initial success of the paper-reduction initiatives and recycling programs led to further waste reduction initiatives, including a closed-fluid waste management system, reusable sharps containers, and electronics recycling with community partners. The team is now incorporating environmental processes into future building design.

Sustainability has become integrated into the organization's culture and remains a priority at the critical access hospital. Sustainability measures have been incorporated into performance evaluations, new employee orientation, engagement surveys, newsletters and hospital signage. The team maintains effective communication regarding sustainability initiatives throughout the organization by keeping information fun, interesting and celebratory.

The Team

Marian Furlong, President and CEO, Hudson Hospital & Clinic

Ann Ripley, VP of Operations and Green Team Leader, Hudson Hospital & Clinic

Citations:

1. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. St. Croix River Basin. Available at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/water/basin/stcroix/>. Accessed 1/28/15.
2. U.S. News and World Report. Hudson Hospital and Clinics. Available at: <http://health.usnews.com/best-hospitals/area/wi/hudson-hospital-and-clinics-6450515>. Accessed 1/28/15.



Accepting the President's Award, from left to right: Sarah Stockman, Dana Slade, Jerry Jennings, Kim Kiel, Patty Schank, Sally Harris, Mike Mader, Jennifer Moebius, Ann Wynia, Chair HealthPartners, Board of Directors, Jean Weiler.