

# CASE STUDY



## ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP IN A HOSPICE CARE SETTING

Hospice of the Western Reserve began its sustainability journey in 2009 when staff formed an organizational Green Team in order to “implement sustainable organizational practices that demonstrate environmental stewardship, economic vitality, and social responsibility in alignment with our mission to promote quality of life presently and for future generations.” Starting with audits of agency waste, energy, and procurement, the Green Team set goals in each of these areas and has since pushed towards broadly incorporating principles of sustainability across the organization. Thus far, one of the agency’s sustainability highlights has been the designing, building and opening of Ames Family Hospice House, a LEED Gold-certified inpatient unit, in 2012. Agency staff and contractors also implemented forward-thinking landscaping and storm water policies and infrastructure on the grounds of both Ames Family Hospice House and David Simpson Family House. Additionally, a recent innovative partnership with Buckeye Industries, another nonprofit, allows the agency to address people, planet, and profit in one fell swoop by employing adults with disabilities in the local community to recycle cardboard and Styrofoam collected from all owned and leased sites.

### Connecting Environmental Stewardship to the Hospice Mission

Hospice of the Western Reserve strives to affirm patients’ dignity of life and advocates for patient and family comfort and quality care during life’s final phase. Recognizing that life matters and continues on from generation to generation, all staff and volunteers believe that, as an agency and a community of people, we are responsible for not only providing the highest quality of care possible for

### Hospice of the Western Reserve

Hospice of the Western Reserve, based in Cleveland, Ohio, is a community-based, non-profit agency providing palliative end-of-life care, caregiver support, and bereavement services throughout northern Ohio. In 2014, the agency cared for 6,520 patients agency-wide, including 2,037 patients in the agency’s two inpatient units, David Simpson Hospice House (40 beds) and Ames Family Hospice House (32 patient rooms). By number of patient admissions, Hospice of the Western Reserve is in the top five percent of hospice agencies in the United States, and is the largest hospice in the state of Ohio.



### ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP IN A HOSPICE CARE SETTING

A goal was set under the category of Quality and Organizational Excellence to “launch an organization-wide sustainability effort that integrates people, planet, and profit to create a healthier, more prosperous organization.”

patients and families presently, but also for benefitting the larger community and future generations by taking environmental stewardship seriously in daily business practices. After all, by operating in a more environmentally conscious manner, Hospice of the Western Reserve actively cultivates a positive legacy for future generations and is able to direct any cost savings from its sustainability actions back to patient care during the end of life journey.

#### History

Formal sustainability programs at Hospice of the Western Reserve (HWR) date back to 2009, when the executive leadership initiated the formation of the agency’s first Green Team. As part of the agency’s strategic plan, a goal was set under the category of Quality and Organizational

Excellence to “launch an organization-wide sustainability effort that integrates people, planet, and profit to create a healthier, more prosperous organization.” To kick start the program, several members of the newly-formed cross-disciplinary Green Team attended a training session conducted by Entrepreneurs for Sustainability in Cleveland, Ohio. The Green Team created an initial organizational sustainability plan with a one-year time frame including baseline assessments of waste, energy, and procurement throughout the agency. A comprehensive analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to sustainability at Hospice of the Western Reserve accompanied the plan which featured goals and objectives with measurable outcomes.

#### Organizational Structure

The Green Team is led by Kathy Gatto, vice president of support services, who reports directly to the CEO, Bill Finn. Ms. Gatto is responsible for updating the leadership team regarding sustainability initiatives, and has yearly performance metrics tied to sustainability initiatives. She supervises the facility management and information systems (IS) teams. Individuals on those teams are responsible for reviewing monthly utility financial spreadsheets (gas, electric, water, sewer, trash pickup) in order to identify inefficiencies and opportunities for improvement across the agency. The facility management and IS teams report quarterly to the vice president of support services on sustainability projects, and the utility spreadsheets are reviewed and revamped on an annual basis in order to tie the agency’s budget to strategic initiatives.





## Accomplishments

### Waste

Since conducting a baseline energy and waste audit in 2009-2010, the Green Team has initiated a number of innovative projects to reduce and redirect waste from their inpatient facilities.

- To reduce paper use, the agency has gone beyond default double-sided printing and reduction of automatically printed reports to add a tracking mechanism to printers in order to identify high volume paper users and allow cost center accounting.
- Donated flowers from weddings, funerals, and other events are rearranged by volunteers to decorate patient suites and public areas. When the flowers and plants are no longer useful, they are recycled into compost, which is then used in the facilities' gardens. The vases and baskets in which the plants and flowers arrived are then sold through the agency's resale shop.
- Styrofoam products and cardboard are taken out of the general waste stream and redirected to a partner organization, Buckeye Industries (BI). BI provides jobs and vocational recycling training to individuals with disabilities in Northeastern Ohio, and ships blocks of compressed materials to buyers for reprocessing into new products.
- Reusable, professionally laundered towels are used to clean up body fluids, replacing the use of "disposable" towels for this purpose.
- Used fluorescent bulbs are accumulated from all sites and picked up from agency headquarters by a certified recycler and put through a recycling process, during which any mercury vapor is captured in a hood, the glass is separated out from the aluminum end caps and any other products (which are then reused in other processes).



### ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP IN A HOSPICE CARE SETTING

- Surplus clinical supplies, capital medical equipment, furniture, and durable medical equipment are donated to charitable organizations such as MedWish, serving people in developing nations.
- Rather than purchasing new furniture, facilities are first responsible for requesting surplus furniture from agency headquarters, where it is sorted and categorized in a warehouse.
- Office supplies are stocked in centralized locations and include surplus and repurposed items.
- A partnership with the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District for Northeastern Ohio Sewer and Water District (NOSWD) was beneficial to Hospice of the Western Reserve in ensuring that best practices for waste management and reduction in Ames Family Hospice House were in place prior to opening. Recycling containers and equipment were purchased through a grant from NEOSWD, and they provided expert assistance on container placement, quantity, and signage.
- Fryer oil is picked up 1-2 times per year from the kitchens to be recycled, with a rebate going back to HWR. 1400 lbs. of fryer oil were recycled in 2013.

#### Chemicals

- 100 percent of cleaning category chemicals purchased at David Simpson Hospice House, and 100 percent of cleaning category chemicals purchased at Ames Family Hospice House are classified as “green.”

- Mercury-free sphygmomanometers and thermometers are used throughout both inpatient units.
- Across the agency, DEHP and PVC were removed from exam gloves, catheters, and IV bags.

#### Food

- Agency spends 81 percent of its beverage budget on healthy beverages.
- “Meatless Mondays” and “Fryer Free Fridays” are promoted at inpatient unit cafeterias for patient, visitor, and staff lunches.
- The Nourishing Change program, overseen by registered and licensed dietitians, provides education on wellness and nutrition for staff and families.

#### Environmentally-Preferable Purchasing

- Purchased EPEAT-registered computers, monitors, laptops, imaging equipment, and televisions.
- Communicated with their GPO regarding the organization’s support for environmentally preferable products.
- Metrics regarding green spend from select key providers through an in-house spreadsheet are tracked and reported in collaboration with the accounts payable team.
- Medical supply delivery was changed from five days per week to two days per week.
- Paper towel and toilet tissue were changed to green products.
- Green certified cleaning products are used throughout the facility.

## ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP IN A HOSPICE CARE SETTING

### Energy

#### David Simpson Hospice House

- Energy use intensity (EUI) is 202 kBtU/sq ft.
- Upgraded to dimmable LED lights in 24/7 work areas, with a payback period of less than 2 years.

#### Ames Family Hospice House

- EUI is 278 kBtU/sq ft.
- Sub-meters used to better monitor energy efficiency opportunities.
- Upgraded a technology system to identify areas of high energy usage so that corrections and adjustments can be made as needed, with a projected payback period of less than two years.
- Purchases wind renewable energy credits for 29 percent of all energy used at the site.

### Green Building

- Water:
  - Sustainability in landscaping starts with smart design. In the gardens, plants are carefully selected to favor species indigenous to the area and adaptable to site conditions. Plants are located within the gardens based on their particular water needs—for instance, hydrangea are planted near downspouts, to limit the need for supplemental watering, and storm water runoff is diverted to rain gardens.
  - Water usage for owned facilities is benchmarked by a staff data analyst through measuring and normalizing water use by square footage,

with separated data for irrigated landscape and internal use for both David Simpson Hospice House and Ames Family Hospice House.

- Instead of irrigating lawns, the grass is allowed to go dormant and revive naturally according to weather conditions.
- In the David Simpson Family House's Tribute Gardens, all water features in place use recirculated water, fed with rainfall.
- On the grounds of Ames Family Hospice House, storm water infrastructure is in place to direct surface storm water from the parking areas across a rock infiltration strip, and into a bio-cell basin, where it is then filtered through a series of layers and into the bio-retention soil mix. Filtered water and any overflow enter an outlet structure to a series of pipes and flows to a wet pond. The wet pond receives all storm water collection from the site and acts as a detention and water quality basin, allowing sediment to settle to the bottom. The filtered and clean water enters an outlet to the adjacent creek.
- At Ames Family Hospice House, 90 percent of average annual rainfall is captured or treated using storm water mitigation infrastructure for runoff so that 80 percent of the average annual post-development TSS (total suspended solids) is removed.
- 127,600 gallons of water saved at Ames Family Hospice House through landscaping sustainability efforts.

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**ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP IN A  
HOSPICE CARE SETTING****Landscaping**

- At David Simpson Hospice House, picnic tables are replaced as they wear out with product that is made with 100 percent recycled or repurposed materials. Tribute benches, named for individuals and families and placed in recognition of donations, are constructed from durable and locally sourced sandstone blocks to minimize ongoing maintenance.
- A Tribute Garden was installed in 2013 at David Simpson Hospice House that was designed to withstand the harshest conditions of the lakeside site. It requires no supplemental watering or pesticides and uses only natural materials for hardscaping. The plants chosen for this garden include tough, native grasses, shrubs and ground covers.
- A tree planting program began in

2013 at both HWR inpatient facilities to replace the aging and low-value trees on site with high-value native saplings, re-foresting the property while encouraging donations. Donors choose a canopy, secondary, or tertiary tree, and gardeners select a healthy native specimen from the grower. Trees are planted in a designated Tribute Grove area, and once the planting scheme is complete in one Tribute Grove area, another Tribute Grove is identified on the property.

**Lighting**

- At Ames Family Hospice House, occupancy sensors contribute to a projected 2.2 percent interior lighting savings, and exterior fixture selection and placement are projected to save 59.2 percent, with no light trespass to adjacent properties.



### Building Materials

- Both inpatient unit facilities feature low VOC wall coverings, paints, materials, furniture, and finishes.
- All materials and furniture used for Ames Family Hospice House contain at least 21 percent recycled content.
- Thirty-four percent of all project materials were manufactured within 500 miles of Ames Family Hospice House.
- During Ames Family Hospice House construction, 94 percent of waste was reused or recycled, surpassing the 75 percent threshold required for LEED credits.

### Sharing Success

Hospice of the Western Reserve's ongoing projects and accomplishments in environmental stewardship are communicated to internal stakeholders through a monthly newsletter that reaches all staff members and an intranet page dedicated to the Green Team. Throughout David Simpson Hospice House and Ames Family Hospice House, signage and strategically located recycling centers describe the agency's sustainability efforts. In each patient room, a placard holder including general housekeeping information includes a page (updated yearly) that describes the agency's green initiatives. Computer kiosks in lobby areas highlight each site's pesticide-free Tribute Gardens and also assist users in locating specific memorial bricks and granite blocks. At Ames Family Hospice House, all tours given to prospective patients and families, professional groups, civic groups, staff,

volunteers, and national and international hospice professionals feature information about the sustainable features of the facility and the energy-saving methods used to operate it. Hospice of the Western Reserve received national recognition from the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) for the Practice Greenhealth awards via the broadly distributed NHPCO e-newsletter.

### Challenges and Lessons Learned

For the Green Team, education and communication were both the biggest challenges and the keys to success. In order to be successful, it was crucial to educate staff on the importance of sustainability and its strong connection to HWR's mission, and to maintain consistent communication across the multiple sites that make up the agency.

Joining Practice Greenhealth was a turning point for the Green Team. Membership enabled them to learn about best practices in health care sustainability. According to Kathy Gatto, "Being awarded a Partner for Change Award for David Simpson Hospice House and a Greenhealth Emerald Award for Ames Family Hospice House is validation for the incredible work and passion that the Green Team has accomplished." CEO Bill Finn agrees. "Sustainable practices benefit the entire community," he said. "Sustainability, environmental stewardship, economic vitality and social responsibility are closely aligned with our mission to promote quality of life for our patients and families, and to leave a lasting legacy for future generations."

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**Bill Finn, CEO, Hospice of  
the Western Reserve**