



Sustainability Executive Leadership Walks/Talks

From the CEO Reducing Our Environmental Impact

Last month, we talked about Virginia Mason's longstanding tradition of giving back and how sustainability is an important part of building a healthy community. This month, I'd like to dive deeper into our conservation work and how we are transforming health care through our innovative EnviroMason program.

Stewardship is a key aspect of our culture, as we strive to carefully manage the resources that keep our community in good health. One area of stewardship that is often overlooked in health care is the need to protect the environment. We know it makes good sense to reduce pollution for future generations.

At an industry level, health care has lagged behind in taking proactive steps to protect our natural resources, but Virginia Mason is once again ahead of the curve. In 2008, we founded the EnviroMason initiative, which is dedicated to finding ways to reduce our organization's environmental impact. We were the first hospital in the Pacific Northwest to begin recycling and composting food waste and materials used in our hospital cafeteria and patient rooms.

During the past six years, we have launched many other innovative EnviroMason programs that show the rest of our industry what is possible. Here are just a few of the many ways we are raising the bar in conservation and sustainability:

- We divert 42 percent of our solid waste from the landfills, recycling and composting much of it so it can be used again in different ways.
- Our energy conservation projects have saved almost 8 million kilowatt hours per year – enough to power 824 homes!
- Our water conservation strategies (like retrofitting restrooms with more efficient toilets and faucets) have saved more than 6 million gallons of water per year.
- We partner with the Environmental Protection Agency and many other organizations to promote conservation through outreach programs.
- We developed a [commitment statement](#) that documents steps we are taking to be good stewards of the environment and reduce our carbon footprint.
- We formed a "Green Team" made up of volunteers from across the organization who are following their passion for protecting the environment and finding new ways to help Virginia Mason conserve resources.

While EnviroMason is a corporate initiative, it really happens at the grassroots level. Our people are the ones behind many of these great ideas. They are what drives EnviroMason, and they deserve much of the credit for what we have accomplished.

Virginia Mason is getting noticed for what we have achieved. For instance, for the past two years we were one of only 125 health care organizations in the country to receive the EPA's Energy Star certification, and we have earned several other conservation awards at the state level. All this recognition at the local and national levels distinguishes Virginia Mason as a leader in environmental stewardship.

I know many of you share an interest in conservation and would like to get involved. Here are some easy steps to get started:

- Turn off the lights in your office at the end of the day or if you'll be out for a while.
- Make sure bathroom and sink faucets in your work area are shut off, with no drips.
- Use alternative forms of transportation such as the bus or a carpool, instead of driving alone to work.
- [Join the Green Team](#) and pitch in to help us improve conservation at Virginia Mason.

One thing is clear – to protect our planet's future, we have to act together. Do you have a suggestion for conserving resources at work, or a success story that you'd like to share? Let me know! Thank you for everything you do every day on behalf of our patients.

Regards,
Gary