2017 Environmental Achievement Award Winners Recognized
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2017 Environmental Achievement Award Winners Recognized

RPU, along with Olmsted County, recognized seven award winners for their environmental achievements in Rochester and Olmsted County during the Environmental Achievement Awards in January.

A theme of education and inspiration seemed to emerge as the recipients talked about their environmental efforts this year. They spoke of their hope to inspire others and future generations to make a positive impact on the environment.

1 | Clifford Hansen
nominator: Jill Danielsen, Rene Halasy, Keith House

Clifford Hansen is an environmentalist who wears many hats. He has served on the Zumbro Valley Audubon Society Board of Directors since 1996 and has been the secretary since 2000. He has led the annual Christmas Bird Count, gathering data to better understand the relationship between global warming and migratory patterns, since 2001.

In 2010, Clifford began volunteering at Quarry Hill Park. He has helped restore sections of the park to its native flora by removing invasive species and has inspired others to do the same. When he’s not clearing buckthorn and garlic mustard, he shares his knowledge with community members who visit the Quarry Hill Nature Center.

Additionally, Clifford is a citizen forester group leader with RNeighborWoods, an organization that promotes the communal benefits of trees. Clifford has helped plant hundreds of trees throughout Rochester neighborhoods.

2 | Lida Casper
nominator: Donna Greason

On May 5, 2017, hundreds of students, teachers, and volunteers came together for a garden party at Riverside Central Elementary School. Students and community members were introduced to the benefits of locally grown food and learned how to be responsible environmental caretakers. Lida Casper, the event organizer, collaborated with the following local partners to make the day a success:

- The Boys & Girls Club of Rochester
- Olmsted County Public Health
- University of Minnesota Rochester
- Redeemer Lutheran Church
- United Way of Olmsted County
- Rochester Alternative Learning Center
- Affinity Plus Federal Credit Union

Students helped build garden boxes, filled them with a mixture of soil and compost, planted vegetable seedlings, learned how to cook using local ingredients, and much more. Produce harvested in the summer was brought to the school’s Community Resource Room to support families in need.

3 | Hy-Vee Rochester Stores
nominator: Kaitlyn Anderson

By integrating an environmental ethic into their operations, Hy-Vee is demonstrating what’s good for the environment can also be good for business. Companywide, Hy-Vee sells responsibly sourced seafood, participates in the “Misfits” program – an initiative to combat food waste by selling discounted produce that doesn’t meet traditional cosmetic standards – and recycles millions of pounds of cardboard, plastic, and paper every year.

In addition to these policies, each of the four Rochester stores has partnered with Community Food Response (CFR) and the Channel One Regional Food Bank to divert food waste. Last year, the stores collectively donated over 164 tons of food (22 tons to CFR and 142 tons to Channel One).
In 2017, Zoey Jantsan was crowned Miss Minnesota U.S. International. She ran on a platform of environmental conservation and has used her time in the spotlight to share her passion. Her top five memories of this past year include:

• Delivering a keynote speech at the second annual Trashion Show – an “upcycling” fashion show that raised money for the Minnesota Audubon Society
• Designing and modeling a wardrobe for Studs, Struts, and Stilettos – another “upcycling” fashion show that raised money for Habitat for Humanity
• Emceeing at the third annual Earthfest Expo
• Volunteering throughout the year at the Rochester Public Library by reading to children
• Delivering a petition to City Hall with members of the Sierra Club, promoting sustainability in the construction of government-funded buildings

John and Patty Trnka have dedicated countless hours to controlling invasive species within Olmsted County Parks. Each week from March through December, the Trnkas make rounds through Chester Woods and Root River Parks. They identify areas infested with invasive species, develop an eradication plan, and train other volunteers in the eradication process.

In the fall, John and Patty lead volunteers in collecting seeds from native grasses. These seeds are stored and later planted in areas that have been cleared of invasive species. The Trnkas also assist with record keeping at Root River Park.

Max Campeau

Inspiring teenagers to pick up garbage on a Saturday afternoon isn’t easy. But that’s exactly what Max Campeau did last April when he organized a cleanup event along the banks of the Zumbro River near Pine Island High School. Approximately 25 students picked up litter along a two-mile stretch of river, starting at the high school and ending at the outdoor classroom, where volunteers planted new habitat in the butterfly garden. The group also planted 50 tree seedlings that had been donated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The litter collected at the event filled over 30 garbage bags.

Becca Jacobson and Annette Homburger – Stewards of Hope

Becca Jacobson and Annette Homburger started Stewards of Hope as a partnership between the Manor View Drive Neighborhood and the People of Hope Church. Together, they coordinated efforts to establish a nature trail within a 20-acre wooded area near the church.

From May to August, Becca, Annette, and over 100 volunteers representing numerous nonprofit organizations, cleared brush, removed invasive plants, and seeded native grasses. Money from the Izaak Walton League of America was used to build trail signs and an informational kiosk at the trailhead. Funds from the Minnesota Master Naturalists were used for supplies to help remove buckthorn.

The trail crosses bluff grassland, oak savanna, and mixed hardwood forest habitats with views overlooking Cascade Creek. According to Annette and Becca, “It provides a green haven for physical recreation, environmental awareness, and the peace of mind that comes from being surrounded by nature.”

The Environmental Achievement Award is a tree made of recycled copper wire and placed on natural stones collected from Lake Vermillion. Each award is individually handcrafted by local artist Lani Towne.
HOW MUCH DOES MY ELECTRICITY USE COST?

We’re constantly using electricity to run devices, appliances, and more. How much does each of these items really cost to run? Using the average electric cost for a residential public power customer — 11.5 cents per kilowatt-hour — and the average electricity used by each item, it costs...

SOURCES

- **$1.05**
  - to cook a turkey in an electric oven
  - Assumes 4 hours of roasting.

- **$0.07**
  - to use a desktop computer for 8 hours

- **$0.17-$0.73**
  - to run a refrigerator for one day
  - Assumes a 225-watt refrigerator operating 24 hours/day.

- **$0.21**
  - to run one dishwasher cycle
  - Range depends on efficiency of washer and how much hot water is used from an electric water heater.

- **$46-$77**
  - to keep a household’s water heated for a month
  - Assumes 4,500-watt water heater, running between 3-5 hours a day.
to run a central air conditioning system for two hours
Range between a 1,200-watt and 3,500-watt system.
$0.02 - $0.06

to watch two hours of TV
Range accounts for different types and sizes of TVs, from small CRT screens to large LCD/plasma screens.
$0.28 - $0.81

$0.01

to use a laptop computer for 8 hours, plugged in
$0.02

to light a room for three hours with four 60-watt-equivalent CFLs
$0.02

< $0.01

to recharge a smartphone
$0.03

$0.38 - $1.02

to do one load of laundry
Assumes a 45-minute wash cycle at 225 watts and 1-hour dry cycle at 2,700 watts. Range factors in $0.04 - $0.68 cents for the water heater, depending on whether a cold or hot water wash is used.

Want to calculate the exact cost of each appliance you use in your home? Visit the Department of Energy’s Appliance and Electronic Energy Calculator to learn more:

Energy.gov/energysaver/estimating-appliance-and-home-electronic-energy-use

#PublicPower
The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule window is coming to an end on April 15, 2018. If you are behind on paying your RPU bill, please contact RPU Customer Relations to make arrangements to bring your account current by April 15. If no arrangement has been made and your account is not current as of April 15, your electric service may be shut off for non-payment. RPU Customer Relations is available from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday to assist you. Visit the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission website for full details on the Minnesota Cold Weather Rule at http://www.puc.state.mn.us/puc/consumers/index.html.

Is Your Home Costing You Extra Energy Dollars?

ATTEND OUR FREE ENERGY WORKSHOP TO FIND OUT!
Attendees qualify for a $50 home energy audit where you will receive FREE “first step” water and energy saving products! You’ll also get expert help with “next step” efficiency improvements.

SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 2018
10-11am • Northrop Community Education Center • 201 8th St NW (Room 308)

TO REGISTER
Call: 888.734.6365
Email: sbootscamp@mncee.org

Learn more at www.rpu.org
Next workshop is Thursday, May 10 • 6:30-7:30 pm
RPU Commercial Customer Corner

Conserving Water in Your Workplace Bathrooms

Conservation can happen in the most unexpected places, including the bathroom! Don’t flush away your water budget. Purchasing a WaterSense® labeled high-efficiency toilet or flushometer-valve toilet could save hundreds of gallons of water per month. Old, inefficient toilets can use up to 7 gallons per flush compared to the new federal standard of 1.6 gallons per flush and the WaterSense® standard of 1.28 to 1.0 gallon per flush. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that if commercial facilities nationwide replaced all of their older, inefficient flushometer-valve toilets with WaterSense® labeled models, we could save nearly 39 billion gallons of water per year. That’s equivalent to nearly one full day’s flow of water over Niagara Falls!

RPU offers a rebate of $25 for high-efficiency toilets and is now offering a new rebate of $50 for flushometer-valve toilets. Those of you who do not work in the plumbing industry may be wondering what is a “flushometer-valve?” Flushometer-valve toilets are typically found in commercial, institutional, or industrial restrooms, and include two components: the toilet bowl and the flushometer-valve. The flushometer-valve is the metal plumbing connecting the toilet to the wall including a lever or sensor to flush the toilet.Flushometers use the water pressure of the plumbing system instead of a water tank to complete the flush.

When deciding on the most efficient equipment for a new facility or replacing old, inefficient toilets that are wasting water and money, a WaterSense® labeled flushometer-valve toilet is an option worth considering.

If you are not looking to upgrade just yet, consider reviewing toilets for potential leaks. Tank-style toilets can form leaks when the flapper valve does not seal correctly. These leaks can lead to a significant amount of water loss, but are not always easily detectible.

An Investment in Proactive Tree Trimming Pays Off

RPU’s commitment to proactive tree trimming and vegetation management is paying off in the form of fewer and shorter outages due to trees in overhead lines. A number of years ago, RPU began to proactively budget nearly a million dollars annually toward tree trimming.

The winter storm that came across southeastern Minnesota on January 22nd dropped close to a foot of wet snow in Rochester. When wet, heavy snow falls on tree limbs near overhead lines, they sag and sometimes make contact, which can cause outages or “blinks.”

As you can imagine, during a snowstorm it is very difficult work to clear branches from overhead lines. Proactive tree trimming work throughout the year helped minimize the impact of the January storm.

Customers can help RPU by doing an inventory of trees on their property and noting ones that may be getting close to overhead lines. RPU would be happy to come by and inspect those trees and take corrective action if necessary to help ensure that you aren’t affected by another winter or wind storm.
Thanks for Visiting with Us at the 2018 Rochester Area Builder’s Home Show!

RPU employees always have a great time meeting and talking with customers at the Rochester Area Builder’s Home Show. This year the topic was energy and water conservation in your home. Our new energy and water conservation tips brochures were a big hit. If you couldn’t make it out to the show, you can get your copies of the brochures by stopping by the RPU Service Center or by visiting the RPU website www.rpu.org.

Additionally, if you have questions about energy and water conservation in your home and didn’t get a chance to stop by our booth, give us a call at 507.280.1500 or visit our website at www.rpu.org.