

Novare® Environmental Sustainability Initiatives

May 2023



Introduction

Environmental sustainability initiatives reduce waste and depletion of natural resources, preserve our quality of life, and save resources for future generations. An environmentally conscious approach is important in senior living as a healthy environment helps residents, staff, and their families by reducing the risk of respiratory illnesses caused by pollution or poor air quality, supports communities in becoming socially responsible and reduce their carbon footprint, and may help reduce operational costs in the long run.

We're proud to share examples of environmentally sustainable practices that Novare® Members are implementing in their communities.

Reduce



“Reduce” is a key principle of environmental sustainability. It means making a concerted effort to lessen the consumption of resources to manage waste, minimize energy consumption, and lessen the overall environmental impact. Reducing can be done in several ways; for example, buying and using only what is essential, choosing products with minimal or reusable packaging, limiting water wastage, implementing long-lasting, energy-efficient technologies to minimize frequent replacement, or reducing waste by converting kitchen scraps and yard trimmings to nutrient-rich garden soil.

Immanuel Lutheran Communities

Prioritizing safety and sustainability

Several “reduce” initiatives are being practiced at Immanuel Lutheran Communities.

Earth-Friendly Ice Melt. One initiative involves the use of coated granular ice melt. Long, snowy winters in Montana can lead to snow accumulation on sidewalks, driveways, and other outdoor surfaces, making them slippery and increasing the risk of serious injuries from slips and falls. Ice melt is used to lower the freezing point of water, causing it to melt and turn into liquid. Ice melt also helps prevent property damage to concrete, asphalt, and other surfaces. Some types of ice melt can be harmful to pets, plants, and the environment. To tackle these issues, Immanuel Lutheran Communities began using coated granular ice melt on sidewalks because it is 40% less corrosive than standard ice melt. It also starts working more quickly, is safer for pets and plants, keeps melted ice in liquid state longer, does not allow snow or ice to stick to sidewalks, and is environmentally friendly.

The use of coated granular ice melt initiative was led by both staff and residents and was implemented in fall 2020.



Coated granular brine

After brining

[Photo credit: David Jolly]



UV Lamp [Photo credit: David Jolly]

Conserving energy. Another “reduce” initiative at Immanuel Lutheran Communities involves a commitment to conserve energy one light bulb at a time! To achieve this, the director of Facilities and Plant Operations conducted an audit of energy efficiency by the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT). Established in 1976 and headquartered in Montana, the NCAT provides resources and solutions to help communities and organizations become more energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable. The audit considers every square foot and its associated utility costs, the types of technology being used for heating/cooling/lamping, and thermal imaging of buildings to assess heat loss. The NCAT audit provided an energy-efficiency evaluation report, which helped Immanuel Lutheran Communities identify areas that needed overhauling to make them more environmentally sustainable. For example, LED lights that are 90% more efficient and durable than regular incandescent bulbs were installed with the help of Flathead Electric Cooperative, the local electric company. Excel Electric, a Montana-based electrical contractor, helped install an energy-efficient generator. Energy-efficient boilers were also installed. Additionally, the community adopted ultraviolet sterilization, a process of killing surface bacteria, viruses, and other pathogens using ultraviolet light, instead of traditional, less efficient methods of surface sterilization. Finally, the engineering company Morrison-Maierle helped make the buildings more energy-efficient.

Robotic vacuums. Another significant “reduce” initiative at Immanuel Lutheran Communities are two robotic vacuums purchased through Whiz Robotics—one vacuum to clean the carpets through the night and one to clean the pools. The purpose of this initiative was to lower energy consumption. The robotic vacuums require one change of battery during the night, which typically lasts for about four to five hours. Staff are alerted to the robot’s location through location-tracking on their mobile devices. While residents were initially apprehensive about the robotic vacuum, they have now warmed up to it, even enthusiastically assigning a name to it – Steve!

The NCAT audit and subsequent energy-saving measures were led by staff and implemented in July 2021.

Other eco-friendly and sustainable measures. The life of tile and carpet covering was extended by moving from material with a seven-year life to material with a 15-year life, and eco-friendly laundry detergents that do not use harmful chemicals were also introduced.



Presenting “Steve” the robotic vacuum! [Photo credit: David Jolly]

What resources were needed?

Home Depot was used as the vendor for purchasing the ice melt, a large area to store the product was needed, and pallet jacks were required to move the ice melt. Additionally, the services of Flathead Electric Cooperative and Excel Electric, NCAT, and the engineering firm Morrison-Maierle were used to make the communities more sustainable. Procurement standards were changed and considerations about the carbon footprint were added after a review of procedures. There was also a need to upscale the technology such as the use of robotic vacuums.

What was the impact of this initiative?

This initiative has led to a reduction in electricity costs, reduction in labor due to changing out bulbs less often, and reduction in replacement cost of lamps. Reallocating the generator loads through Excel Electric has also provided generator stability. UV sterilization has made the facility safer from COVID-19 and other airborne viruses across the whole skilled care building. The robotic vacuum can clean 1,500 square feet of carpet each night. Additionally, the robotic vacuum clears salt that is tracked in more regularly and effectively, reducing the damage and frequency of renovations to flooring.

Lessons Learned/Tips

The NCAT audit was beneficial, as it provided a clear path toward becoming environmentally sustainable. The new ice melt helps sidewalks stay clearer longer; keeps residents, pets, and vegetation safer; and is more environmentally sustainable. Pro tip: Be prepared to use those muscles! The ice melt comes in 2,000-pound bags that are extremely hard to move. It takes muscle, time, and large shovel scoops to fill the equipment. It is also important to train staff as innovative technology is introduced and employees need time to understand robotics. Finally, visit with residents to familiarize them with the robotic vacuums in the hallways.

Kāhala Nui

All Hands On Deck!

What was the purpose of the initiative?

The purpose of the Kāhala Nui Sustainability Plan is to create a more sustainable future for the state, country, and planet by conserving precious resources and minimizing the negative impact on our natural environment. This environmental sustainability initiative was led by staff and was implemented in November 2020. “Reduce” practices at Kāhala Nui include:

- Energy reduction:
 - Replacing incandescent light bulbs with LED
 - Implementation of variable speed devices (devices that are placed between the electric supply and the motor of air conditioning units, for example, to control the flow of energy and save consumption)
 - Reduction of disposable items in the dining rooms, replacing them with reusable melamine serve ware that is dishwasher safe
- Water reduction:
 - Using aerators on sink faucets and showerheads
 - If feasible, watering plants every five days instead of three to save water
 - Sending residents messages about conserving water via Touchtown, an electronic bulletin board
 - Using placemats instead of linen table covers in dining rooms
- Waste reduction:
 - Sending food leftovers to a local pig farm, where they are turned into pig slop
 - Replacing plastic laundry wraps with cloth bags
 - Reducing paper usage by using Touchtown for sharing newsletters and other communications
 - Reducing the amount of color copies

What resources were needed?



Staff had to be educated and trained on properly implementing each of these measures. Also, melamine serve ware, water-saving aerators, payments made to the local pig farm to take the food scraps, and placemats for tables were other resources needed.

What was the impact of this initiative?

Consumption was tracked by monitoring usage of disposables, energy, and food. Depending on the goal, various financial data such as bills and invoices were used to track usage. With changes such as using LED lighting, variable speed devices, and water aerators, about \$637,000 has been saved so far.

Additionally, these practices have been enthusiastically received by residents who have now become more aware about reducing waste and consumption. For example, during dining hours, residents often request staff to not automatically refill their glasses with water unless needed as a way of reducing their environmental impact.

Lessons Learned/Tips

Dedicated team members devoted to the mission are essential to the initiatives. Also, there is a need to look out for supply chain disruptions. Resources are harder to come by on an island, making it even more important to be mindful about usage and what is put in landfills. Another lesson learned was that patience is key! The Kāhala Nui Sustainability Plan involves several important initiatives, but it takes time to see actual results.

Aldersgate

Turning Kitchen Scraps into Garden Gold

What was the purpose of the initiative?

Composting was started in the main production kitchen in 2022 and included any food waste/scraps from food preparation, as well as returned dishes from the dining room. Compost is picked up once a week by Crown Town Compost, a local company that was started by the grandson of one of the residents. The company supplies a couple of compost bins that sit at the back of the loading dock by the kitchen. There is also a special bin within the kitchen that staff use for food waste. Compostable items are defined as anything that undergoes degradation by biological processes and includes vegetable and fruit scraps, non-plastic tea bags, coffee grounds, and yard waste. Dairy, cooked foods, oil, and meat are not compostable items. The breakdown process usually takes about 90 days.

This kitchen waste is then put into the compost bins outside the kitchen that are picked up by Crown Town Compost and will be returned in the spring as compost soil. The delivery of compost soil is free – the composting company only charges for the compost bins and pickup. At this time, the soil goes into the resident garden only and will not be used for groundskeeping.

What resources were needed?

Financial support for the composting company and training of dining room and kitchen staff on proper waste disposal were needed.

What was the impact of this initiative?

The impact has been a reduction/repurposing of food waste; compost is picked up weekly, and the community receives compost soil for the community garden in the spring.

Lessons Learned/Tips

Stay connected to the local community by supporting local businesses such as Crown Town Compost. Also, training the kitchen staff on this new system and what is and is not compostable is critical for the success of this endeavor.



Reuse



“Reuse” is an environmentally sustainable practice that involves using an item or resource more than once, either in its original or slightly modified form. Not only does this extend the item’s lifespan, it also limits waste. An added advantage of reusing is that it cuts down on pollution, greenhouse emissions, and consumption of raw materials that come with the production/transportation/disposal of new products. By embracing the practice of reusing, we can do our part in conserving precious natural resources for future generations.

The Mather, a Mather residence located in Evanston, Illinois

“Orange Brigade” to the Rescue!



To-go boxes at The Mather [Photo credit: Nina Kuzniak]

What was the purpose of the initiative?

When COVID-19 pandemic restrictions required that every meal from The Mather restaurants be packaged to-go, it was clear that using disposables was not sustainable from an environmental, waste, and budget standpoint. It was decided that a better solution would be to transition to reusable to-go containers. This environmental sustainability initiative was led by both staff and residents and was implemented in spring 2020.

The challenge was that these reusable boxes could not just be thrown out in the garbage—they must be collected, washed, and sanitized according to existing culinary sanitation standards. They also must be air-dried because they cannot be wiped dry for safety purposes. Another challenge was that this process is time-consuming; unlike glass or ceramic, plastic takes much longer to dry. The boxes are washed in the dishwasher and then set out on the racks to air dry, which uses up counter space or floor space for standalone mobile racks. During the height of the pandemic, our restaurants closed, and all meals were provided to-go. Although there may not be as many to-go orders now that restaurants have reopened, there is still a need to collect the bags

of used reusables from apartment homes. All of this makes this initiative very labor intensive, and discussions on how to make the process more seamless are ongoing. To help lighten the labor load, residents formed an “Orange Brigade” to pick up to-go bags and containers left outside of resident apartments each morning and deliver them to the collection center. The Orange Brigade also sourced reasonably priced (approximately \$10) travel mugs and encouraged other residents to purchase and use them for beverages in place of disposables. Staff at The Mather helped create signage for this initiative. The Orange Brigade also worked with the culinary team to make sure that when they set out the hot beverage station each morning, they used real chinaware instead of disposable mugs.

What resources were needed?

Sourcing the products, securing the budget, creating a cleaning and storage system, educating staff and residents to gain buy-in, and developing a way to retrieve the containers from residents were all needed. Additionally, an effort is made to make the meals served in the reusable containers more visually appealing and presentable; for example, we use bright green and orange boxes and garnish the food to make it look appetizing. Meals served in to-go containers, in general, look less appealing than those plated in restaurant venues, so one must be creative. For example, serve a portion of fish on a bed of lettuce to make it look visually appealing. Frequent communications around the initiative, culinary staff education about container sterilization, reminding residents to not dispose of the containers and to use travel mugs for beverages, and managing resident expectations have all been needed.

What was the impact of this initiative?

The reduction in the use of disposables was swift and significant. The initial expense for reusables was high; yet, over time, there have been savings due to not having to regularly purchase disposables. Continued efforts to prevent disposal of the reusables remain in place since reusable container replacement is costly.

Lessons Learned/Tips

Resident education is key. Make sure residents have received thorough instructions on how to return containers and ask them not to throw them away. Some meals cannot be presented in the same way – for example, if the meal is served with tartar sauce, it must be in a separate container with a lid. Although portion sizes are the same, food served in the entrée-sized to-go boxes appears less than the standard portion size because the usual garnishes, e.g., rice, peas, etc. that fill up the plate are missing. As a result, the culinary team sometimes receives complaints about the portion size from residents. One way to resolve this issue is to have the culinary team talk regularly to residents at monthly resident update meetings, reassuring them that the portion sizes are exactly the same.



Reusable coffee cup program [Photo credit: Nina Kuzniak]

Lenbrook

Three Cheers for “Resident Champions”

What was the purpose of the initiative?

Residents have expressed concern about the quantity of waste generated by the organization and, in 2022, launched the environmental sustainability initiative as a collaborative effort between residents and staff. A group of three “residents champions” began discussing what they could do to impact sustainability efforts at Lenbrook, and then worked with Lenbrook’s leadership team to create a vision around sustainability, focusing on reduce, reuse, recycle. Together, the resident champions and Lenbrook’s leadership team created sustainability priorities. Most importantly, resident champions worked with the leadership team to create a communication plan that generated interest and excitement around environmental sustainability among residents. It worked! The sustainability efforts created community conversations and increased awareness among residents on their impact on the environment, thanks to the efforts of these resident champions.

Additionally, Lenbrook offers a “reuse” initiative that eliminates single-use to-go containers from on-site dining. Residents and staff use reusable containers, which can be washed 2,000 times before they may be recycled. A reusable container collection spot is located on each floor of resident apartment homes, where associates collect items daily and return them to the kitchen to be washed.

What resources were needed?

Ozzi reusable containers were sourced and four 9x9” containers per resident were purchased, in addition to extra sizes to rotate in the supply. The containers are counted every month to ensure that there are enough in supply. Collection spots have been set up on every floor and a recycling technician has been hired to help collect them daily. Additionally, “resident champions” have been identified to work with the staff leader to help promote and communicate this initiative to the resident body.

What was the impact of this initiative?

Lenbrook is preventing 95,000 single-use takeout containers from entering the landfill every year! Additionally, resident engagement and awareness of the community’s efforts to reduce environmental impact has increased substantially.

Lessons Learned/Tips

Proper communication is important. The biggest challenge was making sure that regular communication was ongoing with our stakeholder groups. Some residents liked the green reusable containers so much they wanted to keep them, so the housekeeping team help to collect them from resident apartments. Thorough communication that encourages participation from residents helped to make this program a success. Residents are amazed at how much material is being collected and are recognizing that more can be done!



Resident information cards at Lenbrook

[Photo Credit: Felecia Sveta]

Recycle



The practice of recycling is another important environmentally sustainable practice. Recycling means collecting, processing, and converting waste into new products or raw materials. There are several steps involved in the process of recycling. First, waste materials that are put into designated recycling bins are collected from households, communities, businesses, and industries by waste management services like the city's trash disposal service. The waste materials are then sorted by the category they belong to (e.g., paper, glass, plastic, or metal). The sorted products are then cleaned and processed into raw materials. For example, paper is turned into pulp, metals are shredded, and plastic is melted, which is then used in place of new raw materials to manufacture products. Finally, we, the consumers, purchase and use these recycled products, contributing to environmental sustainability.

Aldersgate

Think before You Throw

What was the purpose of the initiative?

Aldersgate launched the “think before you throw” program to reuse dining to-go boxes, which cannot be recycled by the city. The dining to-go boxes being used at Aldersgate are #5 plastic, which are common and often used in grocery stores to package items such as rotisserie chicken or strawberries, etc. The larger to-go containers at Aldersgate are #5 plastic, but the city of Charlotte does not recycle them. To reuse these plastic containers, Aldersgate installed drop-off locations for residents to wash and return containers, where they are collected and taken to the “Innovation Barn” – a local arts and sustainability organization just ten minutes away from Aldersgate. At the Innovation Barn, plastic containers are repurposed into various art and community projects. One exciting project at the Innovation Barn involved converting #5 plastic boxes to filaments for 3D printers that were then used to create face shields for frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic!

This environmental sustainability initiative was led by residents and was implemented in spring 2022. Members of the resident-led Sustainability Committee, with support from the facilities director and director of Environmental Services at Aldersgate, made the initial connection with Innovation Barn, requested the drop-off bins, and then actively encouraged other residents to wash and drop off their plastic to-go containers.

Additionally, the Sustainability Committee organizes a clothing drive at the end of each season, with donations going to a local crisis center. The committee also organizes a drive to collect old electronics, which are then sent to Grid, an offshoot of Goodwill that refurbishes electronics.

What resources were needed?

Drop-off bins for the #5 plastic containers and a local recycling center that can reuse containers.



Construction bricks made from recycled plastic takeout containers and beer can carriers at the Innovation Barn [Photo Credit: Charlotte Magazine, August 28, 2022]

What was the impact of this initiative?

As of January 2023, Aldersgate has donated over 15,000 #5 plastic containers, keeping them out of landfills and putting them towards community art projects!

Lessons Learned/Tips

Spreading the word through the community and getting residents involved in the washing and returning of these containers took some time to get started, though once it became a habit for many residents, a significant increase in donations was seen. Also, to successfully implement an initiative, making local connections in the community-at-large is especially important, as is the enthusiastic support of residents. For example, the resident-led Sustainability Committee took the lead by requesting Aldersgate's leadership to invite a City of Charlotte staff member to deliver talks and train residents on environmentally sustainable practices.

Frasier

Recycling Today for a Better Tomorrow!



Recycling and composting area at Frasier [Photo credit: Julie Soltis]

Residents are enthusiastic and committed to becoming environmentally responsible and the staff promptly attends to whatever is needed, e.g., making recycling receptacles available on each floor of the Independent Living apartment home buildings, ensuring that recycling signage is posted and in good condition throughout the community, and conducting “spot checks” to make sure items are being recycled appropriately.

What was the purpose of the initiative?

A team of 30 residents established the Frasier Resident Recycling Committee in 2013. The committee helps residents, staff, and visitors take part in Frasier’s recycling program by monitoring recycling centers for each floor of apartment homes and educating the community on recyclable items. They also have volunteers who oversee a small room for cardboard box collection, where residents can drop off used delivery boxes to be reused. To ensure that items are being recycled appropriately, signage is posted in recycling rooms with instructions and reminders. The Resident Recycling Committee also maintains a virtual library of tips on recycling, which are included in Frasier’s weekly newsletter.

What resources were needed?

Receptacles, space to hold recycling materials, and signage materials.

Lessons Learned/Tips

There is a need to provide ongoing training/education on what can be recycled. The success of this long-standing program is largely due to the close collaboration between residents and staff.

Lenbrook

Here Today, Recycled Tomorrow

What was the purpose of the initiative?

Lenbrook offered a limited recycling program where only cardboard was being recycled. In January 2023, a more comprehensive recycling program was rolled out that includes plastics #1-7, cardboard, paper, aluminum, and steel cans. Every apartment home floor began with a 20-gallon container in resident trash rooms, with the contents of the container being collected daily. This initiative was so popular, the community added an additional 70-gallon container in each trash room to keep up with the volume!

What resources were needed?

The community partnered with a local community organization called Livable Buckhead that is committed to environmental sustainability. Livable Buckhead provided help with collateral and education and provided a “mini-grant” of \$2,500 to purchase supplies needed to launch the expanded recycling program. In exchange, Lenbrook signed a pledge to record and report how many tons are being recycled monthly. Additionally, flyers were distributed to residents about the initiative and recycling education flyers were posted in trash rooms above recycling bins. As for equipment, Lenbrook initially purchased 20-gallon containers and then later added 70-gallon containers. The community also contracted for two eight-yard dumpsters with recycling pickups four times per week. Staff members pick up the recycled materials to bring to the dumpsters. Additionally, the material that goes into the dumpsters is regularly monitored by staff.

What was the impact of this initiative?

Thus far, the community is picking up the two recycling dumpsters four times a week. About 64 yards of material is being recycled every week. The official tonnage is recorded and communicated to Livable Buckhead monthly. The impact on residents' community conversations, or “dinner time conversations” that happen organically among residents and often make it to the more formal meetings in the way of questions to management, is powerful! Residents are proud of Lenbrook’s environmental sustainability program, the impact they are making, and they are seeking out ways to do more. The program has created awareness and education on making a greater impact to benefit both the environment and the community as a whole.

Lessons Learned/Tips

Educate, educate, educate! Recycling is a learning process—many residents had not recycled before, and they were not sure about what goes into the recycling bin. Informational collateral and clear signage were necessary. Additionally, having resident champions who are passionate about this effort and helping to create excitement, educate, and spread the word made it a success.



Lenbrook's recycling information cards [Photo credit: Felecia Sveda]

Waverly Heights

Happiness Is Recycling!

What was the purpose of the initiative?

There was a desire among staff and residents alike to have a smaller carbon footprint and to do their part to become more environmentally sustainable. A Resident Advisory Committee was created in August 2022 with 10 residents providing feedback and recommendations for establishing an environmental program at Waverly Heights. Committee members come from various backgrounds, and they each had specific environmental concerns. Their ideas were compiled, and a 32-point action plan was developed, with the first project being recycling.

What resources were needed?

Staff from the local trash and recycling company, J.P. Mascaro, come in periodically to talk to residents about what is recyclable and appropriate ways to recycle. Receptacle bins were also needed throughout the community. Aside from the help of the recycling company, all resources were sourced in-house.

What was the impact of this initiative?

The recycling company has provided information sessions at the community, which have been very well-received by staff and residents.

Lessons Learned/Tips

Raise awareness by collaborating with a local recycling company. It is important to encourage staff and residents, especially those who may not be environmentally conscious, to change their habits by educating them about recycling and how to properly recycle.



Renew



The practice of “renew” makes up the final R in the quartet of environmentally sustainable practices: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Renew. Renew refers to using renewable resources—natural resources that can be replenished over time through responsible and sustainable practices. Renew also includes the practice of using renewable energy, or energy that is derived from replenishable sources like solar, wind, and hydro. Practices that support and sustain resources such as water, forests, habitats, and the natural ecosystem are included in the principle of *renew*.

Frasier

“Pollinator Pals”: Frasier Meadows Residents Embrace Sustainability



Pollinator Pals inaugural planting [Photo credit: Julie Soltis]

propagation, so this collaboration benefits both parties. Every butterfly garden is a pollinator garden, and every pollinator garden is a butterfly garden!

What was the purpose of the initiative?

The resident-run pollinator garden is one of many examples of how Frasier Meadows residents embrace sustainability. A pollinator garden is a garden designed with the intent of growing specific nectar and pollen-producing plants that attract pollinators like bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. In honor of Earth Day in 2021, the first pollinator garden was set up at Frasier Meadows. This garden is part of Boulder's Pollinator Garden Project to help make the city a pollinator haven. More than 40 Frasier Meadows residents are part of the "Pollinator Pals" group in the community and help grow native seedlings for the city project, as well as more native and naturalized plants for Frasier's gardens.

What resources were needed?

Seeds, gardening soil, cups, native plants, water, and labeling sticks.

What was the impact of this initiative?

The Pollinator Pals are dedicated to making Frasier Meadows one of the first institutional pollinator havens in Boulder. The seedlings that the group grew in winter 2021 were planted at Frasier Meadows and throughout Boulder on Mother's Day 2022.

Lessons Learned/Tips

Partner up. By collaborating with the Butterfly Pavilion, a nonprofit insect zoo, we secured space for new plantings to grow during winter. Frasier Meadows and the Butterfly Pavilion share a common interest in supporting pollinators and native plants

Vicar's Landing

Conservation Conversation

What was the purpose of the initiative?

In 2022, Vicar's Landing was designated a Certified Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation. This designation involved demonstrating that the campus sustainably provides sources for food, water, cover, and places to raise young for multiple birds and animals. To get certified, the senior project manager at Vicar's Landing signed up with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) to receive a list of flora and water sources needed to preserve their native habitat. An example of a plant that supports wildlife in the region is holly berry, which birds and squirrels love! In consultation with landscaping staff, an application was completed and submitted to NWF, which then reviewed it and designated Vicar's Landing as a Certified Wildlife Habitat. The process of certification took only about one week.

What resources were needed?

Multiple types of flora and water sources are maintained to sustain wildlife. A small fee for the certification plaque was paid to NWF.

What was the impact of this initiative?

This initiative is of interest to current residents as well as prospects. The campus needs to be maintained as presented to keep the certification.

Lessons Learned/Tips

Keep residents engaged! Residents are immensely proud of this certification and actively participate in identifying any disruption to the habitat. For example, they tour the grounds and report incidents such as wildlife digging up a native plant on campus. Also, consider showcasing the certification in your local newspapers for publicity and display the plaque prominently to add a sense of pride in residents and staff, and to attract prospects.



Vicar's Landing is a Certified Wildlife Habitat
[Photo Credit: Bruce Jones]

The Mather, a Mather residence located in Evanston, Illinois

Pitching in for the Parks



Resident Kate Kniffen volunteering at a local public park [Photo credit: Nina Kuzniak]

What was the purpose of the initiative?

In 2022, the Save Our Planet resident group “adopted” Raymond Park, a public park two blocks away from The Mather. The residents regularly clear the park of garbage and debris and conduct simple landscape maintenance. They keep the playground area safe for children and provide general beautification of the public gathering space. Residents are committed to this service without any expectation of recognition. Their motivation to help follows in the footsteps of Mather’s founder, Alonzo Mather, who observed the world around him and, where there was a need, figured out a way to help.

What resources were needed?

Residents have provided their own resources, including their time and creativity, for this project.

What was the impact of this initiative?

By clearing overgrowth near the playground area, residents uncovered a section of brick that was part of a recognition of donors. Now the brick area is visible again and the donors are recognized for their contribution. Residents have formed connections by being part of a project together and are proud of the impact they have made.

Lessons Learned/Tips

Resident engagement works wonders! The project has enough people who are committed and motivated. This is a self-directed group, so residents take ownership over the entire project.

Embracing the “4 Rs”



While several Novare Members implemented targeted programs for at least one of the 4 Rs – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Renew – as detailed above, some Members shared a broader overview of their environmentally sustainable practices.

The Legacy Senior Communities

Going Green

What was the purpose of the initiative?

Several initiatives are being implemented at Legacy's two communities, Willow Bend and Midtown Park, led by both staff and residents since 2020. Residents actively participate in recycling efforts. Midtown Park utilizes LED lighting, which is more efficient than traditional light bulbs. Willow Bend is also actively moving to LED lighting.



Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, residents and team members took part in a Green Committee, which discussed how communities could be more environmentally friendly. Willow Bend added recycling bins through the community, office spaces, and in resident apartments. The community picks up the recycling weekly. Willow Bend also added recycling bins in the parking garages. In addition, recycling presentations from the City of Plano are organized at Willow Bend periodically. A field trip to the recycling plants was also arranged for residents, with more than 40 in attendance. Additionally, three hybrid vans have been purchased since 2020 and are used to transport residents to and from appointments, events, and any requests they have depending on availability and proximity.

What resources were needed?

Financial support to purchase recycling bins for Willow Bend, hybrid vans, and LED lights.

What was the impact of this initiative?

At Willow Bend, 85% of residents participate in weekly recycling. Six residents participate on the Green Committee, and they share recommendations with Willow Bend's advisory committee.

Lessons Learned/Tips

Going green involves a substantial financial commitment. Also, a designated space to dispose of batteries is needed. There is also a need to educate residents and caregivers on what is recyclable; posting signage is helpful. Some residents with visual challenges may experience difficulties seeing identifications on items to check if they could be recycled, so having caregivers support them in their recycling efforts is helpful.

The Osborn

Say No to Styro!

What was the purpose of the initiative?

The Osborn implemented a sustainability plan that would address environmental concerns raised by residents in 2022. This included meetings with members of the City of Rye Sustainability Committee, introducing reusable bags and compostable bags, recycling, reducing the use of gas-powered leaf blowers, composting, and installing a green roof system, a rain garden, refillable water stations, and electric vehicle charging stations.

Ending the use of Styrofoam containers was another key initiative. The Osborn has about 900 staff members and 500 residents. Staff have an opportunity to take advantage of lunch at no cost when they're working, which was previously served in Styrofoam containers. Styrofoam and plastic were also being used as to-go boxes by residents who visited the café. With the approval of senior leadership, management implemented a program of phasing out Styrofoam containers and plastic bags on campus. Tips on sustainability were shared, e.g., refilling personal water bottles at water purifying stations instead of using disposable plastic bottles and plastic cups.

There was interest in eliminating gas leaf blowers due to their excessive noise generation and concerns around air pollution. However, electric blowers are not powerful enough sometimes to clear up leaves from the 1,000 trees on campus. Leaves could be a safety concern for community residents who are actively walking on the community campus. For the safety of residents, it was decided to reduce the use of gas blowers but not to eliminate using them. The groundskeeping vendor has added electric blowers to maintain the grounds and uses gas blowers only in areas that are most often used by residents, at specific times of the year, such as fall when there are more leaves on the ground.

What resources were needed?

Increasing costs to the operating budget due to using and implementing new products and procedures, including capital improvements for 2022 to add electric vehicle charging stations and water filling stations.

What was the impact of this initiative?

The changes were well-received by the community and the City of Rye. Residents are excited about new and innovative composting practices at The Osborn, including providing each apartment home with a compostable bin for kitchen scraps. Wastage has been considerably reduced due to less use of

plastic bags and Styrofoam in trash receptacles. These initiatives also increased recycling awareness with staff meeting with residents quarterly to monitor progress.



Water filling station and EV Charging station at The Osborn *[Photo credit: Bill Dadlani]*

Blakeford

Kudos to the “Green Committee”

What was the purpose of the initiative?

Glass recycling. Blakeford had a limited recycling program in place, and in 2020, a group of committed residents formed the Green Committee to expand this effort. This group of about 10 residents, driven by a passion to do better for the environment, identified areas that needed improvement at Blakeford. Although there were plenty of recycling bins all over the community, the group found that we did not keep up with all the changes that were happening when it came to recycling, since every state or city has its own recycling rules and policies that evolve over time. For example, we learned that the city of Nashville does not recycle glass at its recycling centers. So, 95% of the city’s glass goes into the landfill. Blakeford collaborated with Just.Glass, a glass recycling service run by Justice Industries, a local company that hires individuals who may find it difficult to get work due to barriers such as criminal history, poverty, or addiction recovery. Just.Glass provided a large container where glass bottles, etc., are dropped off over the week, which is then picked up every Monday. Blakeford also recycles light bulbs through Terracycle, a New Jersey-based recycling company.



Blakeford has partnered with Just.Glass owned by Justice Industries for weekly pickup of glass recycling

[Photo credit: Whitney Deaver]

To-go bags. Since the pandemic, Blakeford has switched to paper products for to-go orders in the dining room and has given each resident a reusable Blakeford to-go bag instead of using paper or plastic bags.



Labeled recycling bins at Blakeford, and to-go bags and containers [Photo credit: Whitney Deaver]

Composting. Blakeford is currently looking into partnering with Compost Nashville, a local company dedicated to reducing food wastage through composting. For a small monthly fee, Compost Nashville will pick up food waste and other compostable items that will then be taken to the processing facility for composting. Blakeford has 12 raised garden beds in Independent Living, which will use the soil from Compost Nashville.

Aluminum can tabs. Residents also collect aluminum can tabs, for example, tabs from soda cans, cat food tins, soup cans, etc. that are then sent to Ronald McDonald House Charities of Nashville. This program is part of a fundraising campaign by Ronald McDonald House to raise funds for seriously ill or hospitalized children.

What resources were needed?

“Zero Waste Boxes,” ordered through Terracycle’s website, are used to pack light bulbs and ship them to Terracycle for responsible recycling. Seminars and workshops on recycling and environmental sustainability in general through the City of Nashville were also needed to educate residents.

What was the impact of this initiative?

The spirit of legacy and the desire to leave behind a better environment for their children and grandchildren is very strong in our residents. That is one of the reasons why they are so committed to these initiatives.

Lessons Learned/Tips

Each generation has their unique understanding of environmental sustainability. For example, compared to their grandchildren, many Blakeford residents who are 60+ or 65+ have not grown up with these ideas and they may not be as aware of how to go about being environmentally sustainable. It is important to acknowledge this and provide ongoing education on recycling, composting, waste reduction, etc.



**Aluminum can tab collection
at Blakeford** [Photo credit:
Whitney Deaver]

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