

ALLEN AVENUE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH  
EARTH DAY SUNDAY  
APRIL 25, 2010

Earth Day 2010 offered the Green Earth Committee an opportunity to advance our work with the Natural Resources Council of Maine and the merchants of Maine to reduce the use of both plastic and paper bags in the state of Maine by 33 1/3% by the year 2013. Our first strategy, suggested by Delene Perley, led us to encourage all families at the Allen Avenue UU Church to help provide both food and reusable bags for the clients at our local Food Pantry, where Delene is a staunch volunteer. We asked the families to bring their bags of food to church on Earth Day Sunday, April 25, 2010.

Delene created lists of non-perishable food on bright orange paper, and they were distributed at a Sunday service several weeks ago. People told Delene how much they enjoyed taking the list with them to shop for the event. The list was also published in our weekly "e-blast." A beautiful poster, created by Julie Harrison, Ethical Eating Interest Group Chair, held a prominent position in our foyer explaining about our project.

Harold McWilliams, chair of the Green Earth Committee, created a half-sheet filled with information about the energy it takes to manufacture and attempt to compost both plastic and paper bags. The suggested alternative, of course, is to bring your reusable bag with you when you shop.

Delene arranged with a local supermarket to borrow four grocery shopping carts, which she and Julie and Julie's two children wheeled along the street to the church early on Sunday morning. The carts graced the four corners of the sanctuary.

The bags began to arrive early that morning, some colored ones, some plain ones, but all filled to the brim with canned foods, boxes of cereal, toothpaste and toilet paper. The lines of brightly-colored bags brought cheer to our sanctuary. Approximately two-thirds of those in attendance that Sunday participated.

The children's book that morning, entitled, *My Bag and Me*, by Karen Farmer told the story of why it is important for people to use reusable bags. Then, with the help of some adults, the children began to fill the grocery carts.

For both Sunday services on April 25, 2010, the sermon title was, "Dear Earth." Rev. Mykel Johnson spoke about the overwhelming threats to our Earth, but she soon turned her message into one of hope and renewal. She reviewed a few things she had learned during her sabbatical last summer at an environmental camp in Maine about permaculture. A short video made the message real and achievable.

After a potluck, where the participants were urged to bring locally grown and organic foods where possible, Matt Prindiville from the Natural Resources Council of Maine, talked to the small group who wanted to know more about the *Got Your Bags Maine* program.

ALLEN AVENUE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH  
EARTH DAY SUNDAY  
APRIL 25, 2010

Delene arranged for eight members to load up their cars with the **92 bags of groceries**, both the bags and the groceries to be taken to the Food Pantry on Monday morning for the sorting and restocking. Bags continued to arrive at the church for several days, and the total collected rose to **95 bags**.

Our next effort will occur this summer (date to be determined) when members of our Green Earth Committee will stand outside the entrances to a few local grocery stores and do a simple survey of the numbers of people who come out of the store with either paper, plastic or reusable bags. For those who are using paper or plastic, we will ask them if they know about the *Got Your Bags Maine* program, and ask them to bring a reusable bag for their next trip to the store. We will congratulate those who come out with their reusable bags. The Natural Resources Council will receive our survey results.

Prindiville has requested that Delene and I come to Augusta (the capitol of Maine) for a meeting scheduled for early summer so we can meet the merchant representatives. We will talk about our Earth Day event, and also ask them for other ideas of how we can help them achieve their goal of reducing the use of paper and plastic by 33 1/3 % by the year 2013.

Report submitted by: Sally Breen