

Creating a Green Team

by Bethani Gerhard, Minnesota Recreation and Park Association

What exactly is a Green Team? If you happened to miss the session titled “Creating a Green Team” at the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association Annual Conference held this fall in Saint Paul, you might not know.

In 2007, the City of Farmington started a volunteer committee of city employees to create and implement initiatives that will promote environmental awareness and responsibility and titled it a Green Team.

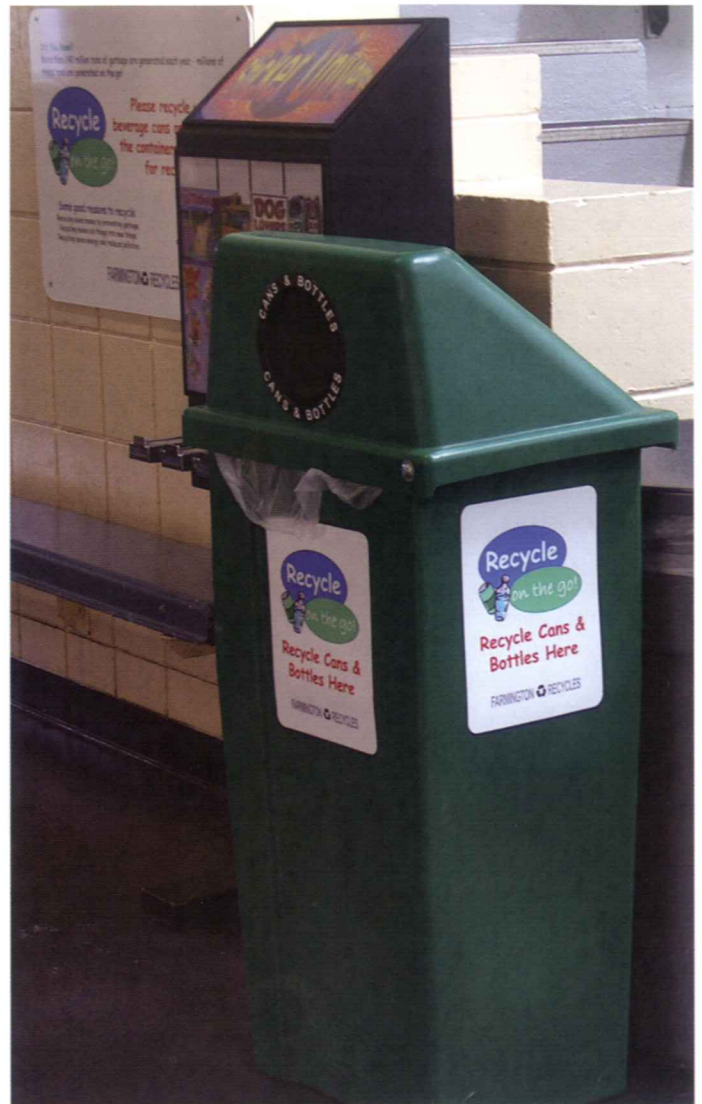
“Jen Collova and I initiated the team after attending the Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Workshop in November 2005,” says Lena Larson, administrative assistant/recycling coordinator for the City of Farmington. “Our main focus became to reduce the impact we had on the environment overall. We wanted to practice what we preached.”

Members include representatives from several of the City of Farmington’s departments — two department heads, two mid-level managers and three people in non-management positions. “Having a lot of different opinions brings great ideas to the table,” says Jen Collova, natural resources specialist for the City of Farmington. “If other cities are interested in starting their own Green Team, getting upper-management to buy into the idea is a great place to start.”

The Green Team’s practices range from getting the staff to use less-toxic cleaning products to using recycled materials on playgrounds and ground-up concrete as a base for picnic shelters.

“New construction is why we started the Green Team,” Collova says. “Since we’re building a new city hall, we wanted to have things like automatic lights, temperature controls, heating and cooling systems and rain gardens.” Those types of preservation ideas fall right into the team’s mission statement: *“The City of Farmington Green Team is committed to developing strategies that will reduce our impact on the environment both collectively and individually, so that we might preserve our natural resources for the citizens we serve now, and in the future.”*

In summer 2007, the Green Team also received a grant from Dakota County to add recycling bins and a sign at its local pool and ice arena. “In only 10 weeks, from the second week in June to



A recycling bin and sign encourage people to recycle.

the third week in August, we collected 50 pounds of aluminum and steel and 300 pounds of plastic,” says Randy Distad, parks and recreation director for the City of Farmington. So far into the season, recycling at the ice arena has been taking off. “At every hockey game, the announcer states, ‘Don’t forget to recycle,’ which helps the people remember,” Collova says. “It’s good to have that buy-in from youth recreation.”

Distad agrees that their recycling program has been very successful. “We’re looking to expand recycling into parks because it’s been so well-received by the public,” he says. “We may even look to expand to events, such as the Rambling River Days, in the future.”

The essential vision of the Green Team is to reduce the City’s environmental footprint and make responsible choices that will set a positive example for employees, the public and other governmental entities. For the team’s first year, they seem to be heading on the right track for the environment. ■