Seed Money Grows Green Schools through USGBC Chapters

Published on **1 Aug 2011** | Written by **Emily Riordan** | Posted in **Center for Green Schools**

These days, everyone seems to be trying to do more with less. More than a dozen USGBC Chapters did just that by making a little money go a long way toward greening their local schools with the 2010 Green Schools Committee Innovation Grants.

Last summer, seventeen USGBC Chapters were the inaugural recipients of these grants, which range up to $2,000. The grants were given to Committees that demonstrated well-defined programs, concrete goals and effective strategies for connecting with their communities in support of green schools. The recipients immediately set to work on their proposed projects, or used the funds to take existing initiatives to new levels.

Building on the success of previous local events, the USGBC-Missouri Gateway Chapter Green Schools Committee put their funds to work to coordinate and host their third annual green schools event, Green Your Existing School, at the LEED Silver Certified Harris-Stowe State University Early Childhood Development/Parenting Education Center in St. Louis. The conference presentations drew an audience of more than 120 school administrators, educators and building professionals from more than twenty schools and districts. Missouri State Representatives Jeanne Kirkton and Margo McNeil (sponsor of the state's Green Schools Caucus) were also in attendance. The event introduced attendees to the LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance rating system, ENERGY STAR benchmarking and strategies for incorporating sustainability into existing curriculum.

In Michigan, Peggy Matta and the Detroit Chapter's Green Schools Committee began the Green Schools in a Lunchbox program. Matta and a group of volunteers wanted to provide resources to local teachers showing how they can be part of the green schools movement in their own classrooms. With a little help from the Innovation Grant, and a lot more from local sponsors, the Lunchbox program brings together existing USGBC green schools information, as well as educational videos, curriculum and weeklong activities organized by grade level, to support the promotion of a healthy and sustainable school environment. The Lunchbox was introduced over the week of Earth Day 2011, during which students participated in an art contest (see images) depicting why they want greener schools.

These are only two of the great projects put underway this year. Whether the projects reached building professionals, school administrators, students, or all of the above (and beyond), the 2010 Green Schools Innovation Grants were a big success, and prompted participation for the 2011 awards, which kicked off this spring. Many of the project proposals for this year's grant, including the eleven Chapters selected, prove that chapters serve as the go-to green building resource in their communities, and are the conveners of local, state-level or regional green schools efforts. With the 2011 winning projects getting underway later this summer and fall, our communities are in good green hands.

Emily Riordan
Community Programs Manager, Center for Green Schools
U.S. Green Building Council

Member employees, USGBC staff

USGBC Articles can be accessed in the USGBC app for iOS or Android on your iPhone, iPad or Android device.