

## Our Citizens Are Our Business

### *Formation*

To create a more productive and sustainable community, Cedar Falls, Iowa, has embarked on a program to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions in its municipal, industrial and residential buildings. Cedar Falls Utilities (CFU) and the University of Northern Iowa's Center for Energy and Environmental Education (CEEE) joined forces with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Rebuild Iowa program to create Conservation City (the brand name of their Rebuild Cedar Falls partnership) in January 1998.

Conservation City's goals follow the Cedar Falls motto, "Our Citizens are our Business." The partnership is targeting to decrease energy consumption by 10 percent in small industrial and residential facilities, and to educate residents on the environmental and economic rewards of energy efficiency. The program also strives to stimulate economic development by providing opportunities for local retailers, financiers and contractors to participate in energy efficiency projects.

### *Foundation*

Education is a key component of the comprehensive energy efficiency program that CFU and CEEE have created for the community. The program advocates teaching children the importance of energy efficiency, consequently reaching community members while providing

valuable information. Both organizations support an energy educator position at CEEE, who coordinates Conservation City. Training all levels of college students to promote and educate energy conservation in the community, with the University of Northern Iowa's (UNI) support, has proven a successful strategy. Students make energy conservation presentations and also perform energy audits on area homes, in which they recommend improvements and then monitor accomplishments. In Cedar Falls' elementary and middle schools, presentations are made about energy conservation and renewable energy resources. Elementary school students who complete home energy audits are eligible to win solar powered hats through the program.



*In Action: Energy Educator Elizabeth Plasket (right) discusses different energy sources with students at a local elementary school.*

#### **PARTNERSHIP FACTS:**

- **Targeted Buildings:**  
Commercial, public facilities, and residential
- **Retrofitted Square Footage:**  
772,000 square feet
- **Estimated Cost Savings:**  
\$60,497 per year
- **New and Notable Innovations:**  
Community education outreach, local financing program
- **Completion Date:**  
On-going

Collaboration efforts also have been effective for obtaining financial assistance. CFU, CEEE and the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities have worked with local financial institutions to establish a low-interest loan program for residential and commercial projects. Participating banks offer the same interest rate for Conservation City projects, generally within half a point of the prime rate. Additionally, CFU provides on-the-bill financing for projects less than one thousand dollars.

To ensure improvements are installed properly, CFU maintains a list of qualified local contractors and periodically inspects their work. CFU provides web page use, staff expertise in marketing, and assistance to complete audits. Energy saved through Conservation City's projects decreases power demand, which lowers utility bills for customers and ultimately reduces CFU's environmental impact.

### *Success*

All sectors of Cedar Falls are benefiting from Conservation City. As of December 2000, 23 building owners were enrolled in the program and had implemented \$904,830 worth of improvements, saving the community \$60,497 annually. University students have audited more than 100 local residences, with many of the identified improvements completed. Just as important, more than 1,500 area students have learned about energy efficiency and renewable energy through demonstrations by CEEE staff and UNI students.

UNI also has become more energy efficient by beginning a multi-year project, scheduled for completion in 2004, involving student residence halls. Thus far, lighting in several of the residence halls has been retrofitted, and portions of the windows have been replaced with insulated, double-pane windows. UNI will continue the window replacement project through the end of 2000.



*Students compare the heat gain from various light sources with Plasket.*

Under the direction of the Mayor, the city is also developing a comprehensive "Master Plan" that includes an emphasis on local energy use and sustainability. The Mayor wants Cedar Falls to become a showcase of energy efficiency and sustainability; the plan will lay the groundwork for these goals.

The commitment and dedication of the Conservation City partners will ensure a sustainable program with benefits for years to come.

### **TO LEARN MORE ABOUT REBUILD CEDAR FALLS, IA, CONTACT:**

**Ms. Elizabeth Plasket**, Energy Educator  
Center for Energy and Environmental Education  
University of Northern Iowa • Cedar Falls, IA • 50614-0293  
Phone: (319) 273-6012 • Fax Phone: (319) 273-7140  
E-mail: [plasket@uni.edu](mailto:plasket@uni.edu)

Visit the Rebuild America Web site at: [www.rebuild.org](http://www.rebuild.org)  
Or call the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Clearinghouse at: 1-800-DOE-3732

