



Elora  
Environment Centre



Winners of the Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce  
2009 Environmental Excellence Award

Over 16 years ago, a group of forward-thinking citizens had a vision of making the Village of Elora a greener and healthier place to live. The result? The Elora Environment Centre was born. A testament to our commitment to environmental change, this little “organization that could” continues to thrive, and we are proud to celebrate the many achievements that emerged from a vision that grew, and continues to grow – even to other communities in southwestern Ontario. The following words and pictures will demonstrate just some of these successes – this vision in action, including our most important asset: the people who have been and are the Elora Environment Centre. As we celebrate “Sweet 16”, we continue to envision and forge relevant paths by developing community-based environmental initiatives for both urban and rural communities.



A founding member of Green Communities Canada ([www.greencommunitiescanada.org](http://www.greencommunitiescanada.org)), we offer several strong areas of expertise: energy, water, trees, transportation. In each of these areas, we are consultants, well-linked in our communities – from Orangeville to Burlington, Windsor to Tobermory – who bring practical, knowledgeable advice, and can meet the environmental need with multi-faceted resources.



The following is a list of initiatives that we have field tested over the years, several of which have grown into successful core projects:

## ENERGY



☞ Long before there were government grants available, we performed residential energy evaluations with our “house doctors” travelling on bicycles. We were involved in Canadian home energy labeling since it began in Canada, piloting the EnerGuide for Houses program in 1998.

☞ *EnerGuide for Houses & ecoENERGY Retrofit – Homes:* energy evaluations on over 30,000 homes, translating into a reduction of more than 10,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases each year. During 2007-2010, our clients have received over \$10 million in grants to help them increase the energy efficiency of their homes.

☞ *Green Retail:* 225 walk-through audits for small businesses across south-western Ontario, conducted from May 2009 to January 2010. Provided practical advice on how business owners can lower energy consumption and increase savings. Over \$50,441 in cumulative energy savings achieved, in excess of 200 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> saved, with a potential of 1,250 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> savings once business owners have followed through on recommendations.

☞ *Youth Energy Project:* High school students put learning about energy into practice in their own homes. Included installation of a demonstration photovoltaic system in the main public area of the school so all could see energy generated by the panel; a presentation to the entire student body to explain power conservation and alternative electrical energy sources; select students received an intense session on home electrical monitoring and conservation then took a kit home and performed a walk-through inventory to identify energy savings opportunities. This project field-tested a useful conservation tool that may be implemented in other schools throughout Ontario.



## TRANSPORTATION

☞ *ecoDriver:* promotes an environmentally-responsible driving lifestyle. Centred in Halton Region, this program educates drivers about proper maintenance, correct tire pressure, and other habits that lead to reduced gas usage and emissions.

- 200 drivers reached in one-on-one education
- tire pressure clinic held at Burlington Canadian Tire store resulted in 197 drivers learning about proper tire inflation and the importance of vehicle maintenance to emissions reduction
- Lunch & Learn sessions facilitated for 10 participating businesses



## WATER

- ✍ *Well Aware:* run by EEC since 2002. Provides a guided self-assessment and education on private water wells. Promotes a range of behavior changes, so that residents can safeguard their well head, and those of their downstream neighbours who share the aquifer.
  - about 800 rural families have benefitted from the EEC providing this program
  - public forums held in several communities with guest speakers from Public Health Units, Conservation Authorities and local municipalities, professional well drillers, septic specialists, the Ontario Ground Water Association, and hydro-geologists
  - Information Provider Workshops conducted which invite local water experts to share information and ensure common messaging around well safety
- ✍ *Well Wise:* Based on the children's book and program "Aqua's Water Well Adventures" by Dr. Mary Jane Conboy of the Well Wise Resource Centre, this interactive program reaches children grades 1-4 with a water stewardship message; groundwater model demonstration with fun exercises to discover water in different forms (liquid, solid, vapour); interactive arts & crafts segment encouraging children to create artwork depicting their favourite part of the water cycle.
- ✍ *UpStream:* offers an integrated learning experience to help students in K-8 understand the river, make connections with an ecosystem and act responsibly towards their environment and more specifically to their watershed.



✍ *Rain Barrels:* In 2003, the EEC offered rain barrels to residents of Wellington County. Two hundred and ninety five (295) barrels were sold, well over the initial project goal of 200. Five dollars of each barrel sold was donated to support the Association for Community Living in Fergus. In the summer months, fifty percent of the water used goes to watering lawns and gardens. Rain barrels are an alternative to turning on the tap, conserving our precious water resources.

## TREES

- ✍ *NeighbourWoods on the Grand:* In response to citizen concern and need in Centre Wellington, this lively urban forestry program was created in 2007.
  - Yearly spring tree plantings and fall mulching days thanks to trained Tree Stewards - volunteers who act as community contacts, helping their neighbours with arboreal issues. In the past 3 years, NeighbourWoods Tree Stewards planted and tended (mulching, pruning) several hundred trees on public land
  - Over 30 volunteers working with the University of Toronto are creating an extensive inventory of Centre Wellington's Urban Forest. We need to know what we have to be able to manage it properly
  - With funding from the Automotive Recyclers of Ontario, partnered with CWDHS landscape students, planting more than 200 trees and shrubs on industrial, commercial, and institutional properties in Centre Wellington.
  - Produced and distributed a Tree Kit to local elementary schools, providing a wide array of curriculum based education about trees and the environment.





- In the fall of 2007, we co-sponsored a schoolyard shade workshop with the public health department, which convinced the public school board to support school yard greening in 3 pilot schools.
- created 5 summer jobs for local students and, most recently, a one-year contract position.
- Celebration Trees, launched in 2009 in partnership with the Centre Wellington Parks Department, is leveraging community donations to plant and plaque shade trees in our community parks.
- Public education programs: Tree Talks, Tree Walks, tree price tags, heritage tree photo contest, table displays, newspaper columns and newsletters.

## **OTHER PROGRAMS WE HAVE RUN IN OUR COMMUNITY:**

- ✍ *Burn It Smart:* in January and February 2003, the EEC hosted 24 free Burn It Smart workshops for members of the public and industry professionals in Fergus, Guelph, Kitchener, Paris, London, Hanover, Wingham, Kincardine, Port Elgin, Cambridge, Clinton and Tillsonburg. Over 1,000 people learned how to burn wood in a more efficient, safe and environmentally-friendly way. Smart wood burning means less carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, and all kinds of volatile organic compounds in the air we breathe.
- ✍ *Active & Safe Routes to School:* 48 schools in Guelph and Waterloo Region hosted a Walking Wednesday program, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by over 6 tonnes. Over 9,000 students from 27 schools in Guelph and Waterloo Region joined millions of students from around the world in International Walk to School Day on October 8, 2003 and reduced greenhouse gas emissions by over half a tone on that one day. Over 200 anti-idling education packages were distributed over the life of the program, with over 100 parents making anti-idling pledges. (Idling vehicles while waiting for students produce twice the pollution of moving cars!)
- ✍ *Green Garden Visits:* The EEC's organic gardening expert visited 25 homeowners in Fergus and Elora in 2002 to provide advice on reducing pesticide use, conserving water, planting wildlife friendly gardens and more. We also distributed Green Garden Information Kits to homeowners. (Environment Canada estimates that up to 50% of the chemicals we use in our yards can wash into local waterways. This is unhealthy for our lakes, rivers and groundwater, and it's a lot of money down the drain!)
- ✍ *Nature Explorer's Day Camp:* This camp was created with the understanding that a green future lies in environmentally aware and inspired children. Operating in Fergus and Elora for children ages 6-10, the camp hosted 55 children in 2003 and 60 in 2002.
- ✍ *Green Hotline:* with generous grant money from the Trillium Foundation, the EEC piloted an environmental phone resource, helping residents of Dufferin and Wellington Counties make good environmental choices. Extensive resource database created, public outreach workshops on a variety of environmental topics as highlighted by phone calls, buying of local goods and services promoted.

