How Faith in Place Helped Me Lose 8,840 Pounds on the Low Carbon Diet!
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Faith in Place invites people of all faiths to work together to care for our common land, water, and air.

On December 8, 2016, we held our Annual Celebration and Fundraiser in Central Illinois. Jean Peters of the Unitarian Church of Urbana-Champaign, a partner of FiP, shared a story about the positive impact that our work has had on the community.

"On warm sunny November 9, I sent this photo to my recycle-and-compost-everything Seattle daughter, with the text “saving the planet, one dryer load at a time”. Her response was not without irony: “nice that global warming is helping you with that”

But this isn’t a story about laundry . . . This is my “Partner Story” about how Faith In Place helped me lose 8,840 pounds on the Low Carbon Diet!

This “diet” plan was introduced by Faith in Place Director Cindy Shepherd and Scott Tess, Environmental Sustainability Manager for the City of Urbana, to a group of “green wannabes” on June 29. Here was a chance for me to do something pro-actively within the congregation that I know to be a “green community” – not just a “green team” within that community. Like many of your own faith traditions, the Unitarian Universalist Church
recognizes and proclaims “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”

Ongoing projects undertaken by the Urbana Champaign church range from butterfly garden plantings, recycling of batteries and printer cartridges, increased availability of bike racks, energy efficient installations in the building, and most recently – solar panels on our roof!! We have a church policy that discourages single-use plastics (thus no bottled water at church events), and we support local and regional environmental activist groups such as Faith in Place.

So here was an opportunity for individual and collective action that could make a difference – to me, individually, as well as to the community and to the planet!

The plan:
Participants, over the course of 30 days (or 4 meetings, which may cover more time than that), attempt to reduce their CO2 emissions by a minimum of 5,000 pounds. Scott’s goal in this was to achieve total “losses” in the Urbana community, which would earn a grant for Urbana Public Works.

The program:

- Calculate starting CO2 “footprint”, using an easy online carbon calculator
- Choose a “Lifestyle Action Plan”, which may include such actions as reducing shower times, lowering the heating thermostat, and eating lower on the food chain
- Choose a “Household Systems Action Plan”, which may include installation of energy efficient lighting, sealing air leaks, purchasing “green power”, and planting trees
- Actions were credited for pounds reduced by the end of the program, and pounds reduction pledged for the future

Here is how our “diet plan” worked:

- We formed 2 groups of 6 households each – a Sunday after-church party, and a Thursday lunch party which met at the Red Herring Restaurant
- As with any party, and especially any diet, our meetings included FOOD – mostly local, sustainable, organic, and vegetarian or vegan – as our awareness of our food choices can affect our carbon output! And as we ate, we lost weight!
- By the final “weigh-in” party, 8 households reported an average total loss (reduced and pledged) of 8,552 pounds!
But even the 4 participants who did not report their losses took significant actions and were ultimate winners.

We shared a few laughs about the challenges of getting everyone in the family to join in making the changes that cut carbon. But no homes were wrecked by our carbon diet program. In fact . . .

**We found that our households**

- Experienced increased awareness of the "interdependent web of existence", as they made behavioral changes and
- Found a renewed interest in collective “Green UU” activities

**We all had favorite discoveries along the way – mine were:**

- I lost 300 pounds by decreasing shower time to 3 minutes (max) and,
- I lost 780 pounds by reducing dryer loads by 3 per week

**Here is a summary of the Carbon Diet:**

- 8/12 households reported
- Total pounds reduced by end of program: 39,345
  - Avg 4,918
- Total pounds reduction pledged for future: 29,135
  - Avg 3,634
- Total avg loss: 8,560
- Beginning carbon calculations: 16,821 – 52,124
- Pounds reduced by end of program: 1,200 – 14,765
- Pounds reduction pledged for future: 200 – 7,000
- Average reported loss for all 12 households: 5,706

Thank you to Faith in Place for enabling our diet challenge by introducing us to the program, supplying the program books, and cheering us on along the way!"

*Do you have a powerful story of how Faith in Place has impacted your life or your house of worship? Share it with us! Contact us at info@faithinplace.org*

[Click here](#) to learn more about FiP.