

Stores Help Community Organization with **GREEN LIFESTYLE**



From the day it was founded in 1705, the small town of Brookline, Mass., has remained fiercely independent and protective of its community identity. Although the 6.6 mile enclave is surrounded by Boston on three sides, the town has stubbornly refused to be engulfed by the larger city. So it's not surprising that a local community group would enlist the support of three of the town's independent hardware stores in an effort to educate consumers about products that help reduce carbon emissions and save money on energy costs.

After receiving grant funds to initiate community-based programs, a local organization, Climate Change Action Brookline (CCAB), contacted a number of small businesses and asked them to participate in a variety of programs related to energy consumption, recycling, green building initiatives and solar workshops.

According to Kate Risse, a CCAB volunteer, "The Green Tools program for hardware stores is part of a larger initiative to reduce the carbon footprint. We went to hardware stores in Brookline and asked them if they'd participate in the Green Tools program

to help promote a green lifestyle and to reduce energy consumption."

Kathy Connelly, owner of Connelly's Hardware, decided to participate in the program because of a conversation she had with a longtime customer last spring. "I had a customer who came into the store who was very excited because she had gone to a workshop based on the book 'Low Carbon Diet, a 30-day Program to Lose 5,000 pounds.' I've read parts of the book, but I haven't finished it. Mary and Climate Change Action are the reasons I became involved," she says.

Forging a Partnership

Hoping to gain a broader base of support, CCAB also enlisted the support of Economy Hardware and Aborn True Value to promote the tools program. Peter Hughes, general manager for Economy Hardware, says, "The tools program is a natural fit for us since we already stock lots of green goods. We think it's a good opportunity to partner with an organization and get our name out in the community."

From CCAB's perspective, it's critical that the tools promoted in the program reflect the organizations' grass-roots approach to educating residents and

small business owners and linking them to resources that will help them reduce their carbon footprint. According to Risse, "Most people think of green products as low-VOC paints and green pesticides. We want to promote things that affect people day in and day out, such as timers. Many people will keep the temperature in their home above 70 degrees whether they're home or not. When we leave at 8 a.m., my house goes down to 58 degrees. We worked with the store owners and asked them to display products that consumers need every day and to place them in highly visible areas of the store."

Jose Monroy, manager at Aborn True Value, says, "The economy is not very good right now. Everybody is trying to save money one way or another. Massachusetts has a lot of old houses and the windows are old and pretty loose, so they're losing a lot of energy. The reason we're participating in the program is pretty simple. I just want people to know how important it is to cover their windows with plastic. Doing little things can make a big difference."

It Takes Planning

From the store's perspective, participating in the Green Tools program



All photos: **Kathy Connelly**, owner of **Connelly Hardware** in Brookline, Mass., partnered with **Aborn True Value**, **Economy Hardware** and **CCAB**, a community organization, to hold a workshop to educate consumers about the *Green Tools* program.



is pretty turnkey and requires minimal involvement from staff in terms of planning and execution. Risse says, "We worked with store owners and asked them to display the items under certain categories like cleaning, paint and cooling solvents. Some stores wanted to create a green aisle, but that didn't work for everybody. We also asked the stores to put in window displays. Two of the stores went back to their suppliers and got little green tags and flags. It really became a nice display for the stores."

Economy Hardware was one of the stores that supplemented the CCAB materials with green signage that is offered through its wholesaler, True Value. "We put up Greener Options signage, endcaps and shelf-talkers," says Hughes.

Attracting with Promotions

CCAB launched the Green Tools program in late October by hosting a coffee hour at Connelly Hardware. The event, which took place from 10 a.m. to noon, gave attendees an opportunity to:

- Learn about the Green Tools program and products that help reduce carbon emissions;
- Find out more about Low Carbon Diet Workshops;

- Talk to energy experts about retrofitting homes for the winter;
- Receive a 5 percent discount on green items purchased during the session.

Along with providing retailers with in-store signage, the organization also placed ads in the local newspaper and promoted the coffee hour on the Internet. Risse notes that when it comes to conservation, "We are finding that people want more information, they want to find out how they can go further than the things they are already doing." That's one of the reasons why Risse's husband, John Lockwood, a contractor and energy expert participates in the workshops. "My husband is into insulation, and he does energy audits to show people where cold air is coming into their homes. The workshops also explain that there are really simple things that anyone can do to reduce the carbon footprint. It educates the public on little things like how they should use a powerstrip, why they should compost and recycle or why they should commute on public transportation," she adds.

By all accounts the official launch of the Green Tools program went smoothly and the workshop was well-attended. Participating retailers and CCAB see this as a program that can be implemented by other hardware stores that want to help preserve the environment and reduce the carbon footprint. ➡

CCAB Makes it Easy for Stores to Participate

The organization developed a list of suggested products and guidelines to help make the promotion a success. Providing colorful signage and brochures and holding workshops are ways to educate customers and support the community. Themes and products for the promotion include:

- Water conservation
- Insulation
- Heating and cooling
- Electricity
- Recycling, reducing and reusing
- Green cleaning/paint products
- Retractable laundry line
- Clothes racks
- Weather stripping and sweeps
- Low-VOC paints
- Green cleaning products
- Insulation window cover (plastic)
- Power strips
- CFL bulbs and light fixtures (pin type)
- Programmable thermostats
- Hot water insulation blankets
- Pipe insulation
- Low-flow aerators and showerheads
- Wind-up flashlights
- Town recycling containers

For more information about how businesses can conduct a workshop, log on to www.empowermentinstitute.net/lcd/.