



# FROM GRAY TO GREEN

## ONE\* AGING ORGANIZATION'S JOURNEY TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY



\*JEFFERSON AREA BOARD FOR AGING (JABA), CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA

CHAPTER 2





## Forewords

### Welcome to JABA's Story

Every day we see signs that the aging of the population affects issues like community design, service provision, resource allocation, and policy development. New paths *will* be set to address an aging society. We favor paths that **let everyone win**. This publication helps us appreciate how addressing the well-being of today's elders can be done in ways that benefit other generations and generations yet to come. The approach showcased here to **transform a nonprofit with a mission to serve elders into an increasingly green organization** is guided by a practical set of ideas, strategies, and guidelines offered in the *Viable Futures Toolkit* ([www.viablefuturestoolkit.org](http://www.viablefuturestoolkit.org)). The organization highlighted here – the Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA) – partnered in the preparation and publication of the *Viable Futures Toolkit*. This publication represents Chapter 2 in the story of how JABA is realizing its mission through more expansive results.

JustPartners, Inc., is responsible for the development and production of this report. We invite you to download the *Viable Futures Toolkit* at [www.viablefuturestoolkit.org](http://www.viablefuturestoolkit.org), read Chapter 1 of the JABA story there, and visit that website regularly for updates about emerging practices across a range of challenges facing our communities.

Paula Dressel, Vice President  
JustPartners, Inc., [www.justpartners.org](http://www.justpartners.org)

### From JABA's CEO

As an Area Agency on Aging established by local governments in 1975, JABA has served the needs of the aging community in the Thomas Jefferson Planning District in central Virginia for over three decades. Our recently updated mission is *to promote, establish and preserve sustainable communities for healthy aging that benefit individuals and families of all ages*. So much of what we do now is in the context of aging as a *lifespan phenomenon* that affects individuals and families from an intergenerational perspective. For JABA, that means sustaining natural resources for future generations, and the sharing of skills and experiences between generations as our society grows older.

We are pleased that our "2020-Aging in Community Plan" received a "Livable Communities for All Ages" award from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, in 2005.

Gordon Walker, CEO  
Jefferson Area Board for Aging, [www.jabacares.org](http://www.jabacares.org)

### From the Lead Author

I would like to express my gratitude to JABA for being such an encouraging environment in which to explore my values and influence our organization's mission. What has amazed me, is that whether folks fit neatly into "rural granola girl" or "Southern Wal-Mart shopper," they are all interested in sustainability and excited to do their part. Our ecoGen team meetings are always fantastic conversations among some of the most dedicated employees, and their contributions have made this initiative the successful project it is today. Furthermore, our Board of Directors enthusiastically bought into the value of sustainability. They supported us in a new mission statement and financed our new JABA branding. Lastly, as a very goal-oriented person, I have to say that it is the collaborative process by which we have accomplished everything you will read about that matters to me the most. And now, let the story begin....

Katrina Salmons

## Acknowledgement

Support for this publication comes from the blue moon fund ([www.bluemoonfund.org](http://www.bluemoonfund.org)). The blue moon fund seeks to improve the human condition by changing the relationship between human consumption and the natural world. Specifically, it supports new economic, cultural, and environmental approaches to resource use, energy use, and urban development. We thank the blue moon fund for its support but acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented here are those of the authors alone. As such, they do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the fund.

We also wish to acknowledge the contributions of Gordon Walker, Kay Jenkins, Cheryl Cooper and Paula Dressel in the editing of this document.

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## Introducing the ecoGeneration Team

*Have you ever had staff eagerly choose to do more work?*

### We needed a name.

Turns out that “Green Team” sounded an awful lot like “Greene Team” – that’s Greene County, one of our rural jurisdictions where we have a community center and a whole team of staff. So someone suggested that we become the “Sustainables,” probably after watching too much of the Incredibles or the Wiggles.

That didn’t pan out, so we solicited ideas from staff adept in name creation. That got us dubbed the “Gang Green” – and while hilarious, we figured that might best stay in house. We opened up our proverbial name box, and stuck in ecology, environment, connections across the generations, and the idea that we’re all children of the earth, and came out with the “ecoGeneration team.” But before we ironed out a name to stamp on our projects, our team simply had to come into being...

Everything evolved from a single moment in 2006, when three staff asked us all to envision our dreams of sustainability at JABA. Who would have thought that one simple activity – sitting around with colleagues, sharing dreams, ideas, concerns – would lead to an organizational transformation? After that meeting, a plan was drafted to take all of our ideas for sustainable communities and make organizational changes that would show our commitment to environmental leadership.

The initial three-member ecoGen team gathered the responses from this all-staff visioning activity in December, 2006, organizing those dreams and critiques into five categories: internal operations, food, outdoor community space, transportation, and building design and construction.

In compiling this information, we realized that we were already doing things on the list (see Chart #1). When we presented our update at the March All-Staff meeting we’d done quite a bit, and already knew what next steps we would take. Our three person team couldn’t represent the full perspective of all interested colleagues, so we asked for more input and had our inaugural ecoGen meeting in April, 2007. Almost 15 staff turned out for a big potluck meal and a grand planning meeting. With input and enthusiasm building, we were able to narrow our focus into specific projects: green cleaning products, green tableware, green office supplies and more.

Soon we had more ideas coming at us than we could accomplish. The usual suspects of limited time, staffing, and money were showing their faces. But with a core team of six committed staff, we were able to move forward with concrete action. We drafted a three-month plan to bring focus to the team. Our plan went something like this:

- May’s Goal: Purchase biodegradable, industrial-strength cleaning products
- June’s Goal: Purchase compostable tableware and maximize use of chinaware for senior meals.
- July’s Goal: Obtain green office supplies and electronics through ENERGY STAR purchases and appropriate e-recycling.

## Chart #1: Our Early Accomplishments

Examples of what was already in the works before the ecoGen team was up and running.

Visioning Goals Dec. 2006	Progress Report Mar. 2007
<b>Outdoor Community Space</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Universally Accessible park space, with community gardening plots and dog areas</li> <li>• Create a program in which middle school kids teach and assist seniors to recycle</li> <li>• Create a community gardening program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UVA student will develop raised planter boxes at Mary Williams Senior Center</li> <li>• Phoneraiser (cell phone &amp; ink cartridge recycling) through local middle school student</li> <li>• Friendship Court Urban Farm developed</li> </ul>
<b>Food</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a kitchen garden; cook and can the food we grow</li> <li>• Purchase local, organic food</li> <li>• Compost our food scraps and old flowers</li> <li>• Reduce volume of disposables at meals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Master Gardeners are looking into a composting site</li> <li>• Looking to purchase local, organic food for Mountainside and eventually all of JABA</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage Charlottesville Transit (bus) access to neighborhood grocery stores</li> <li>• Encourage grocery store delivery to residents of Woods Edge, Ryan, Park View</li> <li>• Purchase electric cars for JABA use</li> <li>• Encourage staff transportation pools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giant, Food of All Nations, and Integral Yoga offer grocery delivery; IY gives a senior discount.</li> <li>• Timberlakes Pharmacy will deliver prescriptions</li> </ul>
<b>Building Design and Construction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look to the closest school of architecture and/or planning for student interns</li> <li>• Work with local association of architects, builders and local govt. to learn from their experiences</li> <li>• Seek pro bono assistance from facility managers of existing green design projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering ideas for JABA adult day health care center and Montessori school expansion</li> <li>• Incorporating green design into all senior housing and senior/intergenerational community centers</li> </ul>
<b>Internal Operations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use biodegradable, eco-positive chemical, cleaning, and office supplies.</li> <li>• Reduce use of paper—work on-line</li> <li>• Encourage community-wide recycling of electronic devices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparison charts for regular purchasing v. eco-products developed</li> <li>• Phoneraiser project underway</li> </ul>

Still, our minds were thinking too fast to keep up. There were ideas that kept coming back to us at meetings, but we did not know how to address them. We no longer had the problem of “Where do we start?” We were suffering from “trying to do everything at once.” We quickly learned how much we could put on our plates while still performing our regular job duties. Our month-long June goal turned into an 11-month commitment. Switching to green cleaning supplies and compostable tableware turned into an elaborate process of research, phone calls and meetings. Who knew it would take over 60 phone calls, eight meetings, and hours of research to get affordable products that would work? Checking with peer organizations about their experiences and using the references listed in the back of this publication helped short-cut some of our work.

“It is very difficult to find distributors who are trustworthy, affordable, and local,” says Emily Daidone who coordinates our purchasing, “Due to the high cost of the Green Seal<sup>1</sup>® products, it has been difficult to switch over completely in the community centers because our budgets have not allowed it. [Our food distributor], a major company that supplies many businesses, restaurants, and our very own JABA kitchens, is just now beginning to think about having Green Seal products available for purchasing.”

Realizing the time and complexity involved in making an informed switch, we decided to make quarterly goals for 2008. Giving ourselves three months instead of one brought us much closer



### First Steps...

1. Brainstorm ideas, dreams, and pet peeves you'd like to change.
2. Gather support. Ask who wants to get involved.
3. Focus that brainstorming list into categories of projects. Identify which ones are easiest to accomplish.
4. Allow more time than you think to get things done.
5. Celebrate every success! Spread the word to peer organizations and the media.

to our 80% minimum level of accomplishment we chose to define as success. Why 80%? Setting achievable goals is important. We wanted to dream big but focus our goals to ones we could actually achieve in the time period we established and allow ourselves some room for error. Keeping our standard here makes people happy, we get to celebrate often, and then move to other goals with a solid platform to stand on.

### Getting our message across

We have worked hard as a team to find a message of environmental stewardship that clicks at JABA<sup>2</sup>. So we asked GreenBlue Institute (whose founders wrote *Cradle to Cradle*) to come talk to us at our March 2007 All-Staff meeting. Maybe Whit Faulconer, of GreenBlue, could impart some wisdom and motivate us to work on things that were beyond our specific job descriptions. Could he relate environmentalism to the things staff care about most – healthcare, jobs, and the tax burden?

What first seemed like a long shot was instead a shot in the arm. Whit ably explained in plain terms that the sustainability he was talking about – that JABA was talking about – was nothing new. Sustainability, he said, is about harnessing the creative solutions of yesterday: the Civilian Conservation Corps of the Great Depression or the “victory gardens” of World War II, and applying it with the sensibility of today. It made complete sense, and this perspective fits so well with the generations JABA spans. From that conversation, we had a platform from which we could tackle our first year of projects.

### What sustainability means to us.

Sustainability is not simply about maintenance and support to keep something material in existence. We also pay attention to the maintenance and support of the people in our organizations, who are the agents of change.

Our progress was propelled by conversations—personal, organizational, and generational about:

- how new approaches to purchasing will affect our centers, which turn into fruitful discussions of JABA's multiple priorities of taking care of seniors, benefiting the community, and protecting the environment;
- which recycling bin a piece of cardstock goes in evolves into stories of how someone has started recycling at home;
- ways to promote resident-centered care in our assisted living facility, Mountainside Senior Living, which have fed into the growing local foods movement;
- sidewalks and street safety, which have led us to think about where we build housing in relation to everyday amenities, while we are also thinking about putting the healthiest materials in homes on a budget.

What we hope never gets lost here with our environmental sustainability is that, besides changes in how we approach the material world, the heart of our movement is about community building. With communication and trust among people, we become more willing to think about the impact of our actions on others and make decisions that have positive benefits beyond our own lives. As one person talks to the next, we are building partnerships across the organization and with others in our community, partnerships that strengthen our interest in conserving resources and energy.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the people that work here are Baby Boomers, and some are years past the traditional age of retirement. They have been through the burgeoning environmental movement of the 60s and 70s and long ago decided whether to pay attention to an environmentalism focused on the notion of limits. Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger comment in *Break Through* that, “environmentalists have long defined their politics in the negative. They write books like *The Limits to Growth*, *The Population Bomb*, and *Collapse*, which focus our attention on the destructive power of humankind rather than on our creative potential. Environmentalists aim to *stop* logging, *restrict* over fishing, and *limit* pollution. They see in housing development only the loss of nonhuman habitat – not the construction of vital human habitat. Thus, the vast majority of environmental strategies aim to *constrain* rather than *unleash* human activity.” (p. 120, *Break Through*)

<sup>1</sup> Green Seal is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to safeguarding the environment and transforming the marketplace by promoting the manufacture, purchase, and use of environmentally responsible products and services – [greenseal.org](http://greenseal.org)

## Revamping our Internal Operations

*Imagine your maintenance staff getting excited about the new orange-scented carpet cleaner.*

It was late 2006 when JABA began a visioning process about what it would mean to be more environmentally sustainable. Notwithstanding our unfulfilled dream of having sheep grazing in the backyard bleating: “JABAAAAH,” here’s what we have accomplished on our internal operations goals.

### Making internal change is one website away!

Check out [www.greenseal.org](http://www.greenseal.org) to determine which of your current cleaning supplies can be switched to environmentally neutral, industrial-strength supplies.

### Cleaning Supplies

JABA’s ecoGeneration Team has worked diligently to find inexpensive solutions to important environmental issues and health concerns. Our halls now gleam, thanks to Green Seal certified Elements cleaning products. We no longer are breathing, flushing, or ingesting toxic chemicals. How did these vital changes come about?

### Chart #2: Cleaning Supply Comparison

Information compiled April, 2008

Conventional Product	Conventional Unit (1 gal) Cost	GreenSeal Unit (1 gal) Cost	GreenSeal Product
Degreaser CleanForce All Purpose Degreaser	\$27.26	\$34.88	LF-E12 Super Duty Degreaser
All Surface Cleaner CleanForce Pine Cleaner	\$8.93	\$30.23	LF-E07 All Surface Cleaner
Tile Cleaner US Chemical Tile Cleaner	\$14.25	\$37.57	LF-E03 Organic Acid Restroom Cleaner
Disinfectant Pine Scent Disinfectant	\$18.07		no alternative
Glass Cleaner 409 Glass and Surface Cleaner	\$9.70	\$33.45	LF-E02 Non-Ammoniated Glass Cleaner
Carpet Cleaner CleanForce Carpet Cleaner		\$34.26	LF-E05 Carpet Spot Cleaner
Bleach Pure Bright (6 gal)	\$1.63	--	no alternative
Dishwashing Detergent CleanForce Detergent	\$18.57	--	still using original product
Laundry Detergent All Detergent (lever bro) (36 lb)	\$63.06	--	still using original product
Sanitizer CleanForce Sanitizer	\$8.13	--	still using original product
Rinse Additive CleanForce Rinse Additive	\$21.42	--	still using original product



We began our search through Green Seal’s website [[greenseal.org](http://greenseal.org)], determining which of our current cleaning supplies could be switched to environmentally neutral, industrial-strength supplies. We were able to switch everything but our disinfectant spray, finding no certified equivalent in the United States. We even changed hand soaps to the foaming Green Seal versions, steering clear of the antibacterial kind, which, ironically, poses health hazards. Now, our paper towels are made from 100% post-consumer recycled content.

With over 10 years of experience in the green cleaning supplies industry, a local cleaning supplies company – Commonwealth Distribution Co (CDC) – helps us to make smart choices. Chart #2 compares Green Seal certified Elements cleaning products purchased through CDC and the corresponding prices of cleaning products we typically purchased through a food distributor. Notice the cost difference between the two companies: it’s a reasonable and affordable conversion. We have begun thinking about a broader definition of “cost” – not only the monetary requirement, but also the impact on our community, our planet, and our ability to protect one another from one generation to the next.

### Compostable Tableware

Knowing how Styrofoam harms the environment, JABA is replacing disposable tableware items with biodegradable ones. We now have “greenware,” with meals for staff and clients at the JABA regional office served with unbleached, compostable tableware and “corn plastic” silverware. The compostable tableware is significantly more expensive than Styrofoam, so the conversion process is slower at our centers as we face budget restrictions. Of course, we use “china” as often as possible, dishwashing our real dishes for most of our meals.

As we began this conversion process, many of the center managers were excited about the switch. Emily Daidone, Community Center Coordinator and ecoGen team member, said that the managers, “were excited and actually doing some investigating on their own.” One Center now looks to purchase a dishwasher for its small kitchen so that they can eliminate the use of Styrofoam.

Making a good decision about disposables wasn’t easy – we had to consider factors such as cost, waste disposal and pollution. Compostable tableware isn’t cheap yet; it means about a 13% increase in costs, even when we do our best to use our china as much as possible. And while Virginia does not yet allow food waste to be composted commercially, we are advocating for pertinent laws and regulations. We serve on a multi-agency taskforce recommending policy change at the state level that would advance local food security. The added



advantage of serving on this task force is that our state-level involvement has broadened our organizational network of advocates through partnerships with environmentalists, consumers, and educators.

With a green consciousness in mind, we decided to purchase compostable tableware – which is completely plant-based – rather than looking at landfill-biodegradable products – which are petroleum-based. Unfortunately, all compostables come from China, while landfill-biodegradable materials are manufactured here, as close to us as South Carolina. Hoping that buying into an emerging industry would stimulate demand to bring manufacturing closer to home, we decided to accept the transportation pollution of the compostables rather than the point-source pollution of adding petroleum directly to the soil or landfill.

This switch provided some unexpected pluses for our seniors. The new forks are a lot sturdier to use – we haven't had any reports of folks chewing broken fork tongs. And our 16oz. bowls are deeper with a narrower diameter, which makes serving soup a great deal less risky.

## Paper Use

Surveying our offices, the ecoGeneration team assessed how to reduce the environmental impact of internal practices. From copy paper to binders, we're keenly interested in how staff can buy less, reuse more, and recycle creatively. Leftover folders and binders are two items we have in abundance. In fact, we have so many binders that we gave over a hundred of our "gently used" ones to a local elementary school (we still have over 200 in stock!). And we always direct staff to our stock of used, good condition folders – just stick a fresh label on and you're good to go!

Paper has been on our minds a lot recently. We designated a tray in our copier for paper already printed on one side so that fewer pages are printed on "virgin" paper, and we're encouraging staff to be proactive by printing on both sides of the paper. Now the good practice is spreading – two more of our busy printers are now stocked with scrap paper and staff are getting the hang of it.

"It has taken me awhile to get used to printing on the back of 'used' paper," said Drew Stevenson, our Communications Manager. "I am a very visual person, and this seems so messy. But I am finding ways to do this, like keeping a stack of used paper to load into my desktop printer, and learning to print on two sides of the paper on the shared printer. I know that this is the right thing to do. So although I may grumble, I feel good about myself."

It's about reversing the paradigm: printing on scrap paper for most items and using virgin paper – with 30% recycled content – only for special projects. Still, being green is a learning process, says our CFO, Leonard Lohman: "I get frustrated when I print something that needs to go out on new stock, only to find it printed on the opposite side with something totally unrelated. This is a

### Turn the page.

Designate a tray in your copier for paper already printed on one side so that fewer pages are printed on "virgin" paper. Encourage staff to print on both sides of the paper except for special projects.

### Need a green holiday gift for your staff?

Have a local printer turn reams of scrap paper into note pads of all sizes. Top them with an informative page on how to go green during the holidays and throughout the year.

to go green during the holidays and throughout the year. Making agency-wide changes often changes other individual behaviors at work, too. Nova Fleming, our receptionist, shared: "I am reducing the amount of paper that I use for small projects. Instead of using a large full sheet of paper, I am cutting the paper to the appropriate size."

When JABA got a new logo, we needed to find alternative uses for our old letterhead, thank-you notes, signs, and other paper products. We have continued to use old window envelopes for things like pay stubs. We are making old letterhead into notepads and re-using the second sheets for printing our certificates of recognition. The thank-you notes get torn in half, and the blank sides are now used for scrap paper. Some of our old signs are being repainted, and we are properly disposing of the others we cannot reuse.

## Recycling

JABA has come a long way from just having a few staff participate in recycling. Leonard Lohman, who also handles our building and facility upkeep, commented on how quickly things have changed: "[A year ago] we weren't recycling much for sure. Only a few participated. Most of us just tossed things away without much thought."

Now we have doubled the number of staff who volunteer to take out recycled materials. Our bins are so overwhelmed that we recently hired Evergreen Recycling, a local recycling pick-up service. We found them because our trash disposal service will not pick up recycling. They say there is not sufficient interest in Charlottesville – an odd claim in light of the fact that Evergreen is turning a tidy profit doing only that. Being flexible, we found a way to make recycling work.

While we ramp up the volume of typical recyclables – paper, cardboard, newspaper/magazines, glass, plastic, and aluminum containers – we also encourage staff to consider recycling or re-use before throwing any item in the garbage. We compiled a list of items that can be recycled or re-used in our local area – auto waste, books, bikes, cell phones, clothes and shoes, food/yard waste, fluorescent light bulbs, furniture electronics, eye glasses, fabric, hazardous household waste, household items and knick knacks, ink cartridges, paint, sports equipment, and vehicles. And then we created a chart (see Chart #3) that we shared with staff so that lack of information would not be a barrier to green practice.

learning process and one that will eventually get absorbed by my brain before sending print jobs."

Meanwhile, we hope to make Post-it® notes and pristine paper pads a thing of the past. Working with a local print shop, we turn reams of scrap paper into note pads of all sizes. Our holiday gift to staff members was a letter-sized scrap paper pad topped with an informative page on how



### Chart #3: An Abundance of Recycling Opportunities

Our cell phones and ink jet cartridges are picked up by a local non-profit, Virginia Organizing Project, for recycling and a small rebate. Nationally, you can recycle cell phones at [www.gooddeedfoundation.org/aarp](http://www.gooddeedfoundation.org/aarp). The phones are refurbished for older adults so that they can make 911 calls, with additional profits going to programs that help women and children escape domestic abuse or that support climate-change initiatives.

REUSE IT	Books	Bikes	Building Materials	Clothes & shoes	Electronics	Furniture	Household Items	Sports Equipment	Vehicles
charlottesville.craigslist.org freecycle.org			Doors Home improvement Lumber Moulding Plumbing Sinks Windows	Fabric	Appliances Computers TV/Video Stereo/ Audio DVDs/CDs/ tapes		Antiques Art Collectibles Garden Housewares Office Equip Linens Mattresses		Cars Trucks Boats RVs
<b>Albemarle &amp; Charlottesville</b>									
<b>Area Libraries</b>	Good condition								
<b>Circa, Inc.</b> 1700 Allied St., Charlottesville, VA (434) 295-5760 www.circainc.com									
<b>Community Bikes</b> Behind Hampton Inn, W. Main St. www.cvillecommunitybikes.org Fri-Sat 2pm - 5pm									
<b>Encore Shop @ Ivy Materials Utilization Center</b> 4576 Dick Woods Rd (Rt 637) (434) 906-0763 www.avenue.org/rsww/encore.htm									
<b>Glad Rags</b> 1923 Commonwealth Dr, Cville, VA (434) 979-1816									
<b>Goodwill Industries</b> 1242 Richmond Rd, Cville, VA (434) 295-3967 1720 Seminole Trl, Cville, VA (434) 872-0171					Appliances DVDs/CDs/ videos				
<b>JABA</b> 674 Hillsdale Drive, Cville, VA (434) 817-5247							Greeting Cards		
<b>McIntire Road Recycling Center</b> 600 McIntire Road, Cville, VA M-F 7:30am - 5:20pm Sa 8am-5:20pm, Su 12:30-5:20pm									
<b>Play It Again Sports</b> 2030 Rio Hill Ctr, Charlottesville, VA (434) 973-2638 www.playitagainsports.com									
<b>Possessions Recycled</b> 100 East Market St, Cville, VA (434) 975-3933				New or vintage clothing					
<b>Salvation Army</b> 1820 Airport Rd, Charlottesville, VA (434) 973-1398 604 Cherry Ave, Charlottesville, VA (434) 979-5230									
<b>SPCA Rummage Store</b> 943 Preston Ave, Cville, VA (434) 293-8475 www.caspsca.org/Rummage.htm Donations: Tues-Sat 10am - 1pm									
<b>The Habitat Store</b> 1221 Harris St, Charlottesville, VA (434) 293-6331									Call (877) 277-4344
<b>Twice Is Nice</b> 923 Preston Ave # B, Cville, VA (434) 293-8319							Small appliances		

All this focus on recycling has really gotten into people's heads! Listen to our staff:

- "Although I have been recycling for a number of years, I only did bottles, cans, paper, and cardboard. I am now looking at anything I discard and asking – should I? I have noticed that instead of having a relatively full trash receptacle to put out at the curb every week, I only put it out every other week and it's usually less than half full. I am throwing away much less and recycling a lot more."
- "Recently I began removing all of my recyclables from my personal trash. I was amazed to see how little trash I actually disposed of if I could recycle everything. Locally (where I live) I cannot recycle all of these products and am considering how I will handle those things I cannot dispose of easily."
- "I have made a game out of recycling at home. My kids are hilarious, but are taking it very seriously at the same time. They are also learning at school. We are buying a can crusher this weekend, so they can crush all the beer cans on Sunday morning, and the Diet Coke cans on the other days!"

#### Our fundamental commitment.

We try hard to adhere to the sustainability triangle: Equity-Economy-Environment. With this triangle in mind, "human commerce... thrives because it obeys nature's rules and works with nature's processes in a kind of creative industrial aikido."

**Christopher Bedford,**  
[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa5378/is\\_ai\\_n21367468](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa5378/is_ai_n21367468)

#### Earth Day

As more staff become involved in our green movement, events such as Earth Day have become a big day to look forward to. Sometime around Earth Day 2007, the ecoGen team decided it would be great to have our own Earth Day celebration, complete with the shredding of expired files and a spring clean-up. Our first JABA Earth Day was in October 2007, when our entire staff got into the clean-up and re-use process. We took a sizable truckload of recyclables to the local recycling center and shredded over 3,600 pounds of paper. Electronic items went to a local store that has set up a community e-recycling program that's free of charge for nonprofits.

This year, folks asked months in advance if we were going to celebrate on Earth Day proper. We organized a full day of events at our central office – from gardening, to a lunchtime walk and potluck, to a compost demo – and asked our center managers to incorporate Earth-friendly activities into their plans that week. We disposed of another truckload of old files, thanks to the initiative of the case managers. And our office product swap table was a huge success – who can say no to free office goods?! Our biggest success of the day was the lunchtime potluck. Sometimes it's just about good home-cooked food and great conversation with people you care about that makes the world go round – and the workplace more friendly.

Incidentally, all this buzz to make our own organization green has caught the attention of other area non-profits and individuals trying to figure out where to start. We're now working with our local SPCA, United Way, and a few area churches about how we can all trim off our collective waste to benefit our communities.

## Community Center Programming

*Our seniors remember recycling the Sears catalog.*

The efforts of the ecoGen team initially focused on material changes we could make to our office environment – paper, cleaners, tableware, recycling, etc. Now that we have incorporated these improvements, we want all staff to carry the ecoGen mission forward.

Our community center<sup>3</sup> managers felt unprepared to explain sustainability to seniors. They told the ecoGen team that trying to explain the “green” concept to seniors was not getting through. It seems that we were throwing ideas at them that had no grounded connection to their lives. Some seniors were thinking “What do you mean this food is bad for me? It tastes good!” or “Why should I recycle at my age?” One center manager commented, “It is difficult for me to get them excited about a cause they feel has nothing to do with them. An 80-plus year old member said to me, ‘I have lived my life.’”

Our solution to integrating an ecoGeneration perspective into our centers is to pose questions around everyday work that lead our managers to think about concrete change. Here’s an example.

Question: What do the seniors like?

Answer: Going shopping!

Question: How can we make this a bit more environmentally friendly?

Answer: Hand out JABA canvas shopping bags for them to take on their trips.

At our Volunteer Recognition events we handed out sturdy grocery bags to over 500 senior volunteers. Guess what – those bags hold up a lot better than flimsy plastic ones, and the word gets out. In this small way of rethinking a specific activity, we made the seniors happy and the environment, too.



In another instance, several seniors at a rural center mentioned at one of JABA’s public forums that the center’s lunch-time meals were not suitable for diabetics. Too many sugars, salt, and carbs – all too common with industrially prepared foods. At that time we were launching a huge local foods initiative, and concurrently, an effort to redesign our menus to be healthier. What a great opportunity to incorporate

### Ask your elders!

Chances are our elders faced similar challenges to what we face now. Use their wisdom to help you move forward.

those seniors into the education process – they became ambassadors for the new meals, telling other participants how the new meals contribute to health and encouraging everyone to send in recipes to the main kitchen for new twists. Here a personal need for healthy food turned out to be well aligned with positive steps for our community’s economy and the environment.

With examples like this, it’s a lot easier to talk about the ecoGen perspective at the community centers. Slowly, “green” becomes a more concrete concept until it’s simply part of how things work at the centers.

In fact, today’s seniors are an “eco” generation of their own. They know how to conserve and preserve. Here are a few examples that are familiar to seniors and that are also considered “green” in today’s terms:

- reusing leftovers or saving bacon grease (that’s recycling)
- sharing extra milk, eggs, or veggies from your garden with neighbors (that builds community and keeps bellies full)
- mending clothes or quilting (that slows the shuffle of material goods)

For us, promoting a viable future through being an increasingly green non-profit is grounded in two basic questions:

1. How can we go green with what we’re doing every day?
2. How can we honor and sustain those practices from the past that we recognize now as being green?

### Seniors say conservation means:

- resoling shoes
- using cloth bags
- canning and freezing food
- mending clothes
- reusing dish water on your plants
- eating leftovers
- sewing feed and food bags into clothes
- recycling the Sears catalog as toilet paper!

What started with uncertainty in the community centers has now become routine. Our community center managers regularly read up on green activities for seniors through the Green Seniors bulletin [greenseniors.org] and pass out Green Granny buttons to eco-chic participants. But it’s not just about a narrow focus on green activities – for seniors, it’s much more about a community-oriented mindset.

<sup>3</sup>We have dropped the word “senior” to highlight the intergenerational program emphasis of our centers.

## Local Foods Initiative

*You say tomato, I say big local beefsteak.*

The movement for locally grown food use is catching on in our region. And there are definite reasons for that:

- Consumer demand has shifted toward better nutrition and trustworthy producers they know.
- Recent scares of contaminated food across the U.S. have pushed people to search for other options, while questioning agribusiness methods.
- In the face of dramatic loss of family farmers, local purchasing can encourage more people into farming by keeping money in the communities where the farming is done.
- Institutions like schools, hospitals, and senior facilities want to offer nutritional foods, create better diets, and reduce health issues like Type II diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, depression, and cancer.
- As more cracks appear in an insecure global food system and oil prices rise, food raised within tens of miles rather than thousands looks a lot more viable.
- A local food system addresses the three pillars of sustainability identified by the National Association of Counties - economic enhancement, environmental stewardship and social well being.<sup>4</sup>
- An area agency made the commitment to “go local first.”

It's not just about economics and health – though these are tremendous benefits. Food raised by farmers close by builds community connections. The relationships shared among producers, consumers, and institutions create interdependence and trust – a stronger community fabric. Learning about the vitamins and nutrients present in different types of potatoes (like



antioxidants!) or how to cook yummy, dark, leafy greens brings old food knowledge to our snack food nation. It creates trust in vegetables that have come straight from the ground to you, rather than being mashed, cubed, dehydrated and sealed at a far away processing plant. We have turned our recoil from the hydrogenated-high-fructose-filled soy/corn/wheat/rice dinner into a rousing movement that simultaneously can heal overloaded bodies and communities experiencing hard times.

## Addressing a Community Need

JABA's not yet out of the global, excessively processed, big business dominated food system. We know we have a ways to go, but we do know where we want to end up. Here's a brief history of how we started bringing locally grown foods to our tables that serve 200,000 meals a year.

JABA received a grant from the Center for Medicare Services to institute resident-centered care at our assisted living facility, Mountainside Senior Living. Resident-centered care means that elders live in their own house, define their own day, and build the relationships they want. Chris Murray, a JABA staff member, explains that with resident-centered care, the answer becomes YES to three essential questions: Would I want to live here? Would I want to work here? Is this place full of life?

**“The idea of a local economy rests upon two principles: neighborhood and sustenance. People are trying to find ways to shorten the distance between producers and consumers to make it more direct and to make this local economic activity a benefit to the local community.”**

**—Wendell Berry**

Decision-making around food is a primary vehicle for enhancing resident-centered care because it brings together resident-centered governance and family values and traditions central to the residents at Mountainside.

Highlighting local food seemed like a great way to build satisfaction among residents and staff. A nutrition council of residents was formed, with the vision of creating favorite meals by each floor and doing recipe-swaps. The council decides which recipes are served as new local foods are brought in. As Chris points out, “Eating is 30% about food and 70% about what we do with food.”

Working with local producers, JABA set out to form a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)<sup>5</sup> collaborative in order to get enough local food to the kitchen. However, we faced logistical challenges, with transportation (farmers are not usually in the business of distribution) and the standard business payment plan (most farmers need to be paid upfront). Plan 2.0 was to contract with a farmer for a specific amount of his or her land, from which JABA would get the produce it needed. We would use the majority of products in our meals and sell the overage.

We encountered two crucial hiccups with our initial effort. First, our typical financial method is completely backwards from what farmers need. JABA pays bills every thirty days. Many farmers need cash up front in order to get through the season. Some of our larger farmers are okay with the 30 day payments, and for the smaller ones who aren't, we have a petty cash account to pay them up front. Second, we were used to working through a distributor. Expanding our local food purchases would mean doing that work ourselves. Fresh local food also expands the amount of kitchen labor for processing and preparing fresh produce. We have received grant money from the USDA which has allowed us to expand our operation.

Round two began in December 2007 when our CEO realized that JABA, as an institutional meal provider, could become a catalyst for the local food movement. JABA hired a Local

<sup>4</sup>www.naco.org

<sup>5</sup>A CSA helps the food buying public build relationships with farmers. By making a financial commitment to a farm (usually before the growing season begins), people join the CSA and receive a weekly basket of produce. – *Charlottesville Area Buy Fresh Buy Local Guide*

Foods Coordinator with grant money to facilitate the development of a local food production system. The earliest meetings first discussed how to incorporate local food into seniors' meals, acknowledging the need for JABA to be out front as a system builder and process catalyst. Our Community Food Nutrition Manager, Judy Berger, was already on the ball, talking to local farmers who could provide produce in the immediate future.

JABA's Local Foods Coordinator, Neal Halverson Taylor, pointed out that others in our community were likely trying to do the same thing. Working with Judy Berger, Neal organized an advisory committee to see what similar initiatives already existed. Over 15 prominent people showed up for the first meeting – local restaurateurs, local producers, institution and university representatives, school teachers, local government officials all attended. Within a few months time we would have nearly 30 folks showing up, with many new faces each time. At the initial meetings we discovered that there was an overwhelming desire to create a local food system, but none of the pieces were in place. "These meetings helped us realize that we could do this on a much larger scale than just meeting JABA's needs," says Judy Berger.

The local food advisory board, with a slightly new representation each time, continues to meet as needed, about once every other month. The large group meetings continue to educate new players and generate ideas on how to make a large, but local, food system work. A Business School professor from the University of Virginia (UVA) has kept us focused on building a scalable model by raising critical questions about the business aspects of the project, such as:

- How will this operation be profitable, given that local food is much more expensive than processed?
- This initiative enhances our public image and reputation, engages staff and clients, and benefits our community. How can we convert those benefits into monetary terms?

We anticipate that our pilot program could pave the way for UVA as well to shift toward local food sources and create a cradle-to-cradle model, where someday food scraps go back to the

earth through smart composting practices to grow new, better tasting food. (Composting is another venture unto itself and will require changes in Virginia law to allow commercial composting of food scraps.)

With this much interest in consuming locally produced food, it would be impossible to have individual businesses going to farmers for requests. In order not to overwhelm the farmers and ourselves as an institution, we need a coordinated system that benefits all parties. Chart #4 identifies many of the basic necessities for different community players to address.

**If you are a county official or have a good relationship with your county official, here's what you can do...**

Advocate for ways that counties can support:

- Local food councils
- Farm to school /nonprofit connections
- Infrastructures for local producers
- Agricultural conservation easements

Read about how other counties have succeeded at [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org). Enter "Counties and Local Food Systems" into the Search function.

**Chart #4: Recipe for Local Food Success — Who Can Do What**



\* **Institutional Food Systems** include schools, universities, hospitals, aging organizations, other nonprofits, etc.

\*\* **Value-Added Product Entrepreneurs** might make locally sourced vinegars and oils, salad dressings, sauces, dried, frozen or canned items and more available to area consumers.

## What Going Local Looks Like in Our Community—One Vegetable at a Time

Getting to the point of all-local all-the-time is still down the road for JABA. We still face the hurdles of enough staff to prep the food, room to store it, and methods to preserve it. In the meantime, we are starting with one vegetable at a time. For our first year, Judy Berger picks up produce all around the region, enjoying conversation with the farmers and seeing the dirt where the food grows. We've seen fresh strawberries, lettuce, spinach, kale, cabbage and greens, traveling to local farms and the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction (SVPA), where over 400 farmers contribute goods.

On a visit to SVPA, Judy talked with the manager of Horse and Buggy Produce food cooperative, who was bidding and buying big. A light went off in her head. She said to herself: "Why am I here when someone else can do this? We need a transportation system."

### Understanding farmers' needs.

Farmers need to know by December of the year prior to harvest what to plant so they can order their seeds, chicks, and feed and plan accordingly. Just like everyone else in the market, they strictly adhere to the laws of supply and demand and tend to be understandably cautious about new ventures. We must:

- tell our producers what we want
- commit to follow through with our purchases
- insure their production with enough cash that they won't go under if a crop fails

Here's the good news: By the high season of late summer we'll be serving 700 locally-based meals each week (and another 2100 meals to assisted living residents)! JABA staff have crisscrossed the state and attended seminars to learn from other local food systems in place. It turns out that most everyone in Virginia is about as far along as the Charlottesville area. There is a huge desire to support local foods in the economy, but rarely is there an established way to do it. What JABA learns will benefit our sister AAA's in Virginia and other nonprofits in the region.

## Advancing the Project

We could not have pursued this venture alone. Collaboration has come – and is still needed – from a broad swath of allies and donors. Particularly noteworthy is the following support:

- Graduate and undergraduate students at UVA are researching best practices in local food initiatives around the country.

- When our project was successful enough to attract grants, the blue moon fund, whose hometown is Charlottesville, supported the development of a buyer's consortium and efforts to identify strategies to knit together all the components of a local food system.
- We have received funds from the USDA, which has neatly packaged money for just this sort of thing.

### Going local gets good press!

*Richmond Times-Dispatch* reporter Bill Lohmann sat down with several staff for a terrific local food lunch of roasted butternut squash and apple soup with cilantro walnut pesto, caprese sandwiches, salad greens, and an apple crisp. Great press ensued, and the *Daily Progress*, our local paper, and Channel 29, a local NBC affiliate, picked up the story as well. You can read the *Times-Dispatch* coverage at [www.inrich.com](http://www.inrich.com) – search "local food JABA"

- Other interested parties are working separately on food security at the state level. Working with policy makers to reorient state-level regulations toward small farmers will make a huge impact on the viability of the local food market. Handling and processing regulations in particular are a huge hurdle to small farmers and institutional buyers.

## Our Continuing Pursuit to Do Good

### *How far can a focus on sustainability take us?*

Sustainability at JABA can mean everything from eliminating unnecessary spotlights around the central office building in order to prevent light pollution to creating a biweekly wellness station where employees can visit a nurse at JABA with their health concerns, for free. Some efforts appear to fit under the traditional umbrella of environmentalism and others, like our employee benefit initiatives, create wellness for ourselves, both individually and in our organization.

In our new housing projects we seek to create healthier structures that contribute to vibrant neighborhoods. Our houses are for residents of all abilities, thanks to Universal Design principles, and uphold our commitment to the environment with safe, energy efficient, responsibly managed materials. The structural benefits of the houses impact the health of the people living in them and the value of the community as a whole. Through these actions we eliminate the divide between good for the "environment" and good for "people." As humans, we need good habitat just as much as the birds and fish do.

We are using our strengths as an AAA to invigorate communities and bridge their divides. Our hope is to promote diverse community interaction and create community centers where all ages will congregate and enjoy lifelong learning.

One new community center will bridge two rural communities and use space designed for intergenerational activity to bring younger and older folks together. The center will feature childcare, preschool, and after-school care adjacent to the senior center, with areas of shared space, indoor and out. Community members will be able to meet and have fellowship here, dig in the community gardens, or walk to the nearby family medical practice. Proximity to healthcare allows our nurses to better coordinate care and makes rural transit more efficient.

With the development of a Lifelong Learning Center in downtown Charlottesville, JABA plans to combine a senior center and a Montessori school with a culinary arts program, small scale local food processing, complementary/alternative healthcare programs and a moderately priced public café using locally grown food. The intent is to bring generations together to learn, to share and to have fun. We would like to lead by example, showing that locally grown food tastes so good, is so good for you, and can be so affordable, that you wouldn't stand for anything less.

As JABA continues its commitment toward sustainability, which has now become part of our organizational DNA, we especially thank our community partners and residents, who encourage and support us in our mission. While our staff's dedication is noteworthy, any organization can put themselves in this picture with an initial ounce of intentionality. If you need some guidance to get mobilized, we know you'll benefit from the *Viable Futures Toolkit* ([www.viablefuturestoolkit.org](http://www.viablefuturestoolkit.org)). Go Green!

## Resources and Further Reading

### Online Resources

- [Coopamerica.org](http://Coopamerica.org) – including National Green Pages
- [Earth911.org](http://Earth911.org) – national recycling information (electronics, household, automotive, etc.)
- [EPA.gov/aging](http://EPA.gov/aging) – examples of community green projects that engage seniors and youth
- [EnergyStar.gov](http://EnergyStar.gov) – energy efficiency information and products
- [Greenseal.org](http://Greenseal.org) – cleaning products
- [Grist.org](http://Grist.org) – environmental news and commentary
- [Treehugger.org](http://Treehugger.org) – How to Go Green Guides
- [Viablefuturestoolkit.org](http://Viablefuturestoolkit.org) – issue briefs, best practices, and practical steps and guidance to build sustainable communities for all ages
- [Worldcentric.org](http://Worldcentric.org) – compostable tableware
- [www.charlottesville.org/greencity](http://www.charlottesville.org/greencity) – Charlottesville Green City

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### **Case Studies in the Viable Futures Toolkit Series:**

1. Jefferson Area Board for Aging, Charlottesville, VA: Chapter 1
2. Jefferson Area Board for Aging, Charlottesville, VA: Chapter 2
3. Arizona Community Foundation
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