

# Going Green: Basic Steps to Save Our Planet<sup>1</sup>

## **Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute Scholars:**

### **Shelly Austin; LSW**

*Hands Supervisor; Green River District Health Department*

### **Brenda Edge; RN, B.S.N.**

*Nurse Program Manager; Green River District Health Department*

### **Laura Lindsey**

*Account Clerk III; Green River District Health Department*

### **Connie Nalley; RN, B.S.N.**

*Nurse Administrator; Green River District Health Department*

### **Anita Owens; RN, B.S.N.**

*Nurse Supervisor; Green River District Health Department*

### **Rebecca White; M.P.H., B.S., RS**

*Environmental Supervisor; Green River District Health Department*

## **Mentor:**

### **Angela Woosley; RN, B.S.N., M.E.P.**

*Nurse Specialist/Planner; Green River District Health Department*

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The GRDHD Leadership team acknowledges the importance of becoming a responsible role model in our community by practicing environmental strategies which enhance a healthy environment. We have identified that the Public Health sector should take a lead role in promoting eco-friendly behaviors. By reducing the carbon footprint within our organization we will demonstrate our commitment to protect our planet, promote environmental education and prevent further destruction to our earth.

## **INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:**

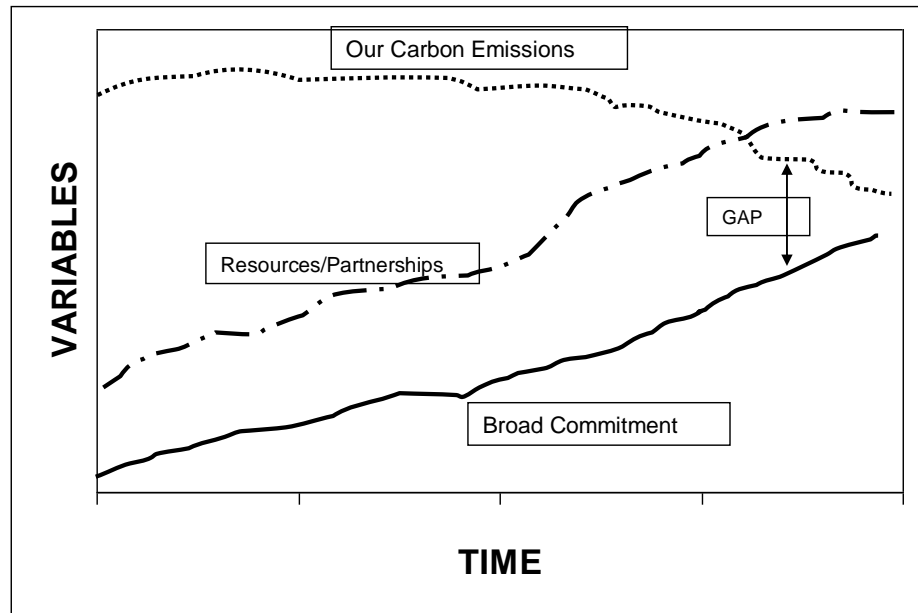
In the design of this KPHLI leadership team, six strong-willed women came together with one common purpose to help save Mother Earth. Our vision, through trial and error, became clearer as we focused on the issue of reducing our agency's carbon footprint. The name "Gang Green" reflects the variety of entities within our group as well the name of our organization and our "Green" project.

### ***Problem Statement:***

***Why, in this emerging eco-friendly environment is there not a broad commitment from the Green River District Health Department to lessen our carbon footprint on the environment?***

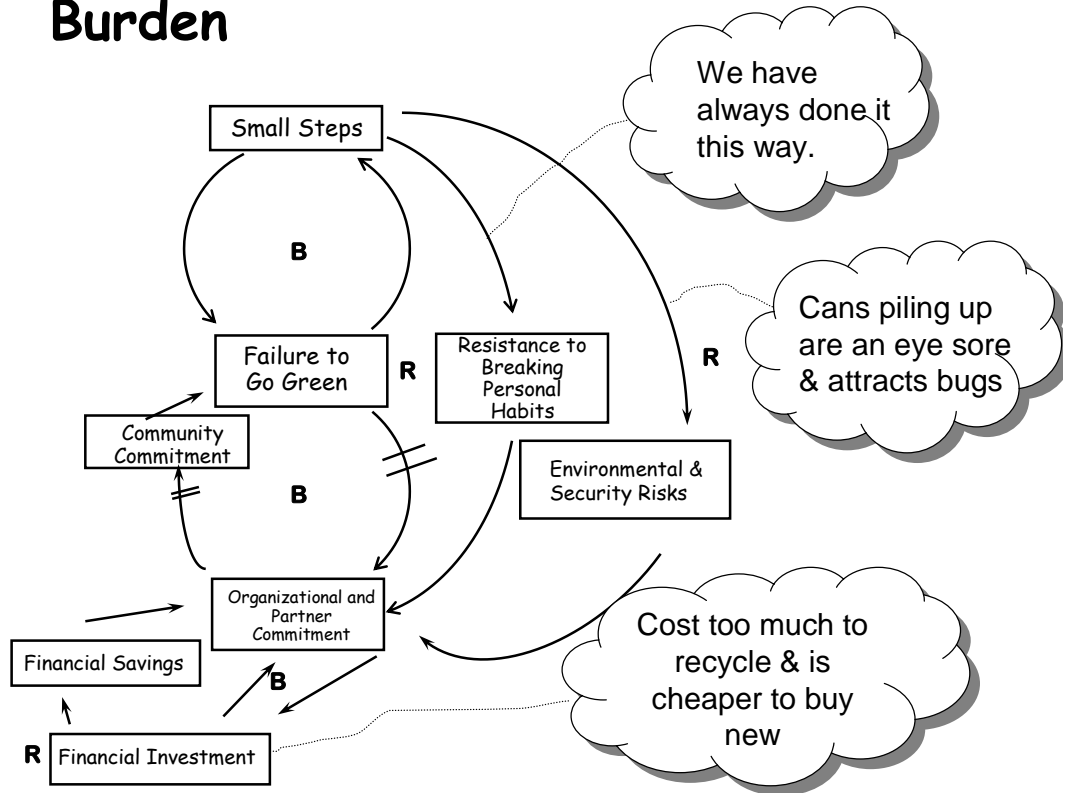
*Behavior over Time Graph:*

## Key Trends Graph



Causal Loop Diagram:

# Causal Loop Diagram: Shifting the Burden



**10 Essential Public Health Services/National Goals Supported:**

**Essential Service #3**

Inform, Educate and Empower People about Health Issues

**Essential Service #4**

Mobilize Community Partnerships to Identify and Solve Health Problems

**Goal 7: Increase the quality, availability, and effectiveness of educational and community-based programs designed to prevent disease and improve health and quality of life.**

7-5. Increase the proportion of worksites that offer a comprehensive employee health promotion program to their employees.

7-6. Increase the proportion of employees who participate in employer-sponsored health promotion activities.

**Goal 8: Promote health for all through a healthy environment.**

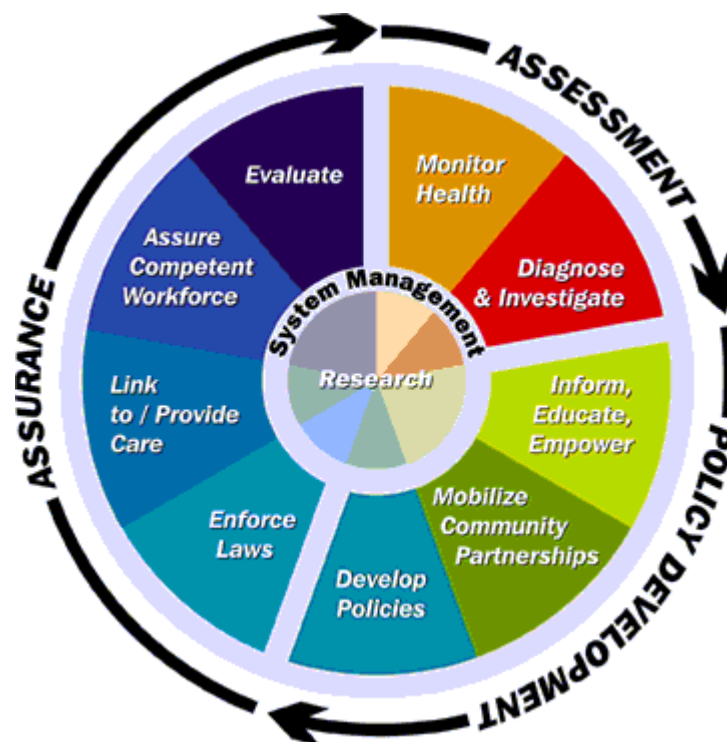
8-2. Increase use of alternative modes of transportation to reduce motor vehicle emissions and improve the Nation's air quality

8-3. Improve the Nation's air quality by increasing the use of cleaner alternative fuels.

8-4. Reduce air toxic emissions to decrease the risk of adverse health effects caused by airborne toxics.

8-15. Increase recycling of municipal solid waste.

8-17. (Developmental) Increase the number of office buildings that are managed using good indoor air quality practices.



**Figure 1: 10 Essential Services and Core Functions of Public Health**

## **PROJECT OBJECTIVES/DESCRIPTION/DELIVERABLES:**

The goals of the Gang Green team are to:

- Reduce the carbon footprint and energy consumption of our organization by educating employees
- Inform, educate, and empower employees ways to “Go Green” at work and at home
- To educate community through participation/creation of eco-friendly events
- Implement ways of going “paperless”
- Increase efforts of recycling throughout the organization

## **METHODOLOGY:**

The first thing we learned about “Going Green” is that it is a huge undertaking. If you stop to think of the thousands of things you do everyday or use everyday and how changing those little things could enhance the environment, you can be overwhelmed, not only by the enormity of the process, but also by the cost. Throughout this year, our team has researched several projects with the prospect of reducing our energy consumption in the district-motion detector lighting systems, hand blow dryers in the restrooms, to name a few. Another important lesson we learned is education is the key to beginning the process. People have to be made aware of the benefits of creating an environment that is helping to stabilize our planet and the dangers in not changing attitudes or habits. It is also important to remember that even though you cannot bring about drastic change all at once, every little step made toward improving the environment is beneficial. If everyone would make one small effort every day to reduce waste or energy consumption, the results would have a tremendous impact.

While these ideas were well received by senior management, budget constraints have definitely put them on the back burner. Not to be daunted with a budget with zero dollars, our team pooled our resources and put together several projects to aid in understanding the benefits of a green environment and/or to reduce waste and our carbon footprint. Gang Green was responsible for arranging with Habitat for Humanity to pick up cans for recycling at each clinic location and we are working with our maintenance department on recycling cardboard. We are promoting the “going paperless” movement within GRDHD.

By educating our employees within the district, we have started to bring about change within our organization. We have determined that every little bit helps and we will continue to strive to “go green”. Although we had big dreams in the beginning of our project, realistically we had to scale back in order to achieve something attainable within our reach. By implementing these changes, hopefully our organization will continue to build on our efforts.

## RESULTS:

Gang Green has achieved the following since the initiation of the project in April, 2008:

1. Implementation of a Green Tips awareness multimedia campaign. Suggestions and tips for energy conservation were published in our district's bi-monthly newsletter. Ideas for going green projects were demonstrated on the A.M. Evansville show produced by the Fox 7 channel in Evansville, IN and viewed throughout the Kentucky counties in our district.
2. Conducted an Arbor Day Tree Give-Away for Green River Health Department employees. Sixty Norway spruce trees were given away through a random drawing of all employees in conjunction with Kentucky Arbor Day on April 3, 2009. Flyers were e-mailed in advance explaining the benefits and rewards of planting trees both in the country and in neighborhoods.
3. Collaborated with Habitat for Humanity on recycling cans. Covered boxes were placed in break rooms throughout the district to collect used drink cans. Habitat for Humanity collects these cans in order to raise money for their building efforts.
4. Worked with the USAA Educational Foundation to receive their booklet "Living A Greener Life". These booklets were presented at various meetings throughout the district and distributed to all employees.
5. Conducted a B.Y.O.B. (Bring Your Own Bag) drawing for all employees of the Green River District Health Department. This drawing was held in conjunction with Earth Day on April 22, 2009. Twenty re-useable canvas bags for grocery or other shopping were given away through a random drawing. Flyers were sent to all employees explaining the benefits of using canvas/nylon shopping bags and reasons why plastic bags should be banned from our life.
6. Worked with several departments within our organization on implementing and educating our workforce on a "paperless" workplace. Technology upgrades are on the drawing board so our organization can move towards paperless processes. However, for now, all travel requests and reimbursements can be reviewed, approved and forwarded to the proper parties and/or for payment via email.
7. Gave a presentation to our district's Senior Management team suggesting various ways to reduce our carbon footprint within the organization such as lighting controlled by motion detectors and hand dryers in restrooms, to name a few. While favorably received, all suggestions had to be placed on hold due to budget concerns.

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

With the culmination of our Change Master Project, we have become educated and also educators in efforts of “Going Green”. In conjunction with the Green River District Health Department, we have instituted a variety of actions to aide in our effort to lessen our organization’s carbon footprint on the earth. Since there are many shades of “Green”, any effort to sustain our earth is beneficial. We hope through our “Green” endeavors that we have created a foundation for our organization to build upon.



## **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES:**

### ***Shelly Austin***

This past year at KPHLI was challenging in a positive way. It provided me with an opportunity to grow professionally and personally. KPHLI showed me how to develop my leadership skills to the fullest potential. It provided me with new valuable tools to use in my role in the public health system. I feel very blessed to have been given the opportunity to work with my group, GANG GREEN. Getting to know everyone's unique personalities was something I would not have gotten a chance to do before and it proved to be an enlightening experience.

### ***Brenda Edge***

The past year has held many changes and challenges for me. The KPHLI program has increased my knowledge of public health area. I have been at the health department for almost 7 years. I have learned more in the past year about the role that public health plays in the overall health of our community. The KPHLI experience has enriched me as a leader in the public health area. I hope to be able to apply what I have learned from this experience in my everyday functioning. I have enjoyed working with the other members of the "Gang Green" team. We are all from the same district health department but operate in different programs. We would not have had the opportunity to get to know each other and the various roles that they play in our organization. Being a KPHLI scholar has placed me in an elite group that will help shape the future of the public health program in Kentucky. I wish that all public health employees could participate in this invaluable experience. (I'll keep my fingers crossed.)

### ***Laura Lindsey***

My experience in KPHLI has been both rewarding and educational. The majority of my business career has been outside of public health so I appreciate the comprehensive education I have received in this area. Understanding the global picture of public health and the ten essential public health functions translates into a clearer understanding of my own agency's purpose and goals. This education is invaluable to me. Also of considerable value have been the many leadership development skills taught. In some instances I was reacquainted with previously learned techniques and realized that knowledge in these areas means nothing if you don't implement that knowledge. Our Change Master Project team has been a pleasure to work with. Being from the same district has helped logistically with meetings and travel but it also has given us the opportunity to learn more about the various departments within our own organization. The camaraderie conveyed while completing all tasks and projects has contributed to an exciting and satisfying year.

### ***Connie Nalley***

My participation with KPHLI has not only taught me effective ways in becoming a better leader, but challenged me to take a deeper look at myself, my strengths and my areas of growth so that I can continue to build on my leadership abilities. I've enjoyed the opportunity in working with co-workers from my agency that normally I wouldn't. Although we each have distinct personalities that in the beginning was challenging, we managed to set our sites on our goal and was successful to obtain it. The personal relationships which I have developed with the other team members will be an experience I will hold special. I believe through this last year I have expanded my resource bank and it was there all the while, but I never took the time to notice. I'm grateful that I as given this chance to better myself, develop new friendships and represent our district.

### ***Anita Owens***

This past year as a KPHLI scholar has been a rewarding experience. I have learned more about myself with the tools that were utilized. The social styles and 360 Emotional Intelligence have given me insight to the areas that need improvement to become a more effective leader. I have enjoyed working with my change master team "Gang Green." While we are all from the same district I had not worked with these individuals before and have gain friends as well as colleagues from my organization. I am grateful to have had this opportunity and the experience to learn more about being a better leader in my personal and professional life.

### ***Rebecca White***

The Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute has been an intriguing learning experience during the past year. As a KPHLI scholar, I have been exposed to a variety of learning experiences. Although I had heard of KPHLI before, I still did not know what to expect when I began this journey. I have been employed with the health department for over seven years. During this time, I have continuously learned new things. As an Environmentalist, it is important to know how to deal with people, specifically dealing with the public. With the help of my KPHLI group, I feel that I have gained an insight to my leadership style and to also take a look at how others perceive me. This has allowed me to observe others and study their styles and possibly alter mine to what works best. It is important to realize that no two people are alike and not all leaders are alike. By focusing on this, I feel that I will only improve my skills by adapting to my surroundings. I also realize that it is important to be aware of my problem areas and work towards keeping my stress under control.

## REFERENCES

1. Arnoldy, Ben, "Seldom Recycled, Plastic Grocery Bags Face Bans in S.F.," Christian Science Monitor, March 29, 2007
2. Container Recycling Institute, "Stemming the Tide of Trashed Aluminum Cans," news release, May 23, 2005
3. The National Arbor Day Foundation, Resource Guide, April, 2004, Issue 7.
4. Schildgen, Bob "Hey Mr. Green" Sierra Club Books, 2008, pp123-130.
5. The Global Development Research Center, [www.gdrc.org](http://www.gdrc.org)

