

Providence Valdez Medical Center Says "Go Green"

Written by Rachel Korkoske & Sean McCallister

While Kermit The Frog's adage that "being green isn't easy" may hold true for some, Providence Valdez Medical Center (PVMC) is implementing **Green** strategies that are paying off. **Go Green**, a grass roots initiative started by the Medical Center in March 2008, is creating a culture of increased environmental responsibility, one in which employees and Valdez residents and businesses unite to implement sustainable solutions that lessen the environmental impact within the hospital, community and personal residences.

Go Green was conceptualized by Sean McCallister, PVMC Administrator, with the intent to engage employees and lessen the environmental impact at the Medical Center. "Going Green is simply the right thing to do," says McCallister. "It truly requires a cultural change and our employees have taken so much ownership that **Go Green** has become infused into our short- and long-term strategic goals."

McCallister is quick to point out that the real drivers of the program are members of the Medical Center's **Go Green** Committee, a group of passionate employees responsible for conceptualizing and implementing numerous **Green** projects in 2008.

Some of the projects include transitioning to paperless meetings, an internal recycling program, reduced

electricity use, alternative commuting to work incentives, consideration of environmentally-friendly cleaners, facility energy efficiency enhancements, and ultimately the pursuit of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) facility certification.

party for all staff.

In a facility the size of PVMC, a 10% savings equates to substantial dollar savings, as is evidenced by the 2008 data in the chart below.

In 2009, PVMC is installing flame regulators on all three of its boilers, an enhancement that is estimated to save approximately 6 percent in fuel consumption, reduce more than 16 percent of current emissions, and extend boiler life.

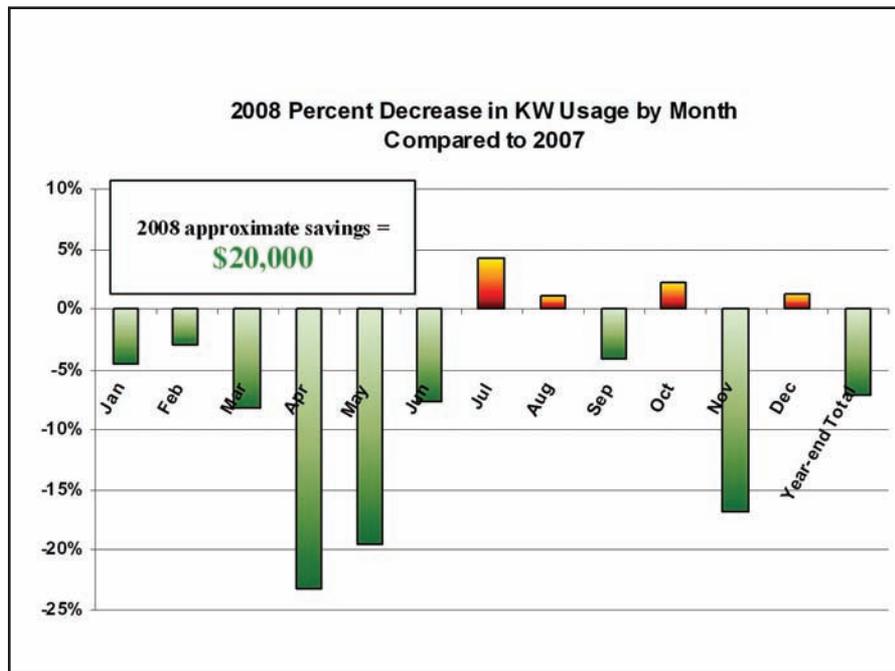
PVMC's *Healthy Living* Initiative, a home-grown program that promotes healthy living and well-being, dovetails with **Go Green** by encouraging exercise, nutrition, and low-impact, healthy commuting options.

Employees who commute to work via alternative means (walk, bike, rollerblade, etc.) are entered into month-

ly drawings for gift certificates and additional paid time off. Although a highly competitive drawing in the summer months, several hardcore employees use studded bike tires to ride year-around regardless of weather conditions.

Tammy Hill, Business Office Coordinator, is in charge of rewarding alternative commuters and heads the *Healthy Living* program. "I would like to see people take more initiative and think about both the environment and their own health," says Hill.

"To me, as a physical therapist, a healthy environment, healthy community and healthy individuals are inseparable," says Mark Robertson, a fellow healthy commuter. "Providence's encouragement and initiative for people



Above data shows 2008 PVMC Cost Savings

Employees encourage each other to turn off lights when leaving rooms (including turning off unnecessary lights in common areas) and shut down computers at the end of the day. "Switch Hunt" – a tactic to catch employees in the act of voluntarily practicing green behaviors and award them with incentive prizes like reusable shopping bags and water bottles – kicked off in January 2009.

Kilowatt usage is tracked each month and compared to the same month from the prior year. When the facility reduces electricity use by 10 percent or more in a given month compared to the same billing period from the prior year, then the hospital provides a mammoth lunchtime pizza



Above: Gigi Obren, PVMC Physical Therapist, commutes on her bike throughout the year. Top Right: Emili Moneyhun, Rehabilitation Department, all smiles during the October bag drive. Middle Right: Every door in Behavioral Health was decorated with reusable materials at Christmas. Bottom Right: Josue Rivera holding a wreath designed by Lucy Lang – both work in Dietary. Photos courtesy PVMC



to both choose alternate transportation and to be as environmentally conscious as possible in the workplace dovetails nicely and the hospital is very proactive in giving people concrete rewards, such as paid time off.”

High levels of employee engagement are evidenced in many ways throughout the Medical Center. Both the Behavioral Health and Dietary Departments demonstrated Green holiday spirit by creating Christmas door decorations out of used, recyclable materials.

Although PVMC is not a collection site for recycled goods, it is actively working with the City to discuss potential collection sites and storage for recyclable materials. In the meantime the Medical Center is utilizing resources that are available, such as taking collected plastic shopping bags to Safeway and aluminum cans to Rotary sponsored dumpsters.

As a way to encourage employees to take green habits home with them, PVMC hosted a plastic bag drive last October and awarded each employee who participated with a reusable shopping bag.

According to Rachel Korkoske, Speech Therapist and Co-Chair of the Go Green Committee, PVMC is just

getting started. “We have a lot of great ideas in the works to promote community participation,” says Korkoske. “We will continue to build relationships with businesses in the community and the City of Valdez, further develop our recycling program, organize low impact days, and foster the spirit of health and wellness among our neighbors and friends.”

Korkoske is also in charge of an electronic Go Green newsletter that the Medical Center publishes internally and externally each quarter.

Copper Valley Electric Association is pleased to support this effort and provides PVMC with information and tips on energy efficiency that is included in the newsletter.

While Providence Health System is exploring, and in many cases implementing, Green strategies for all its facilities, PVMC has taken an aggressive approach to lessen its environmental impact and is considered a frontrunner in this regard among its Alaskan sister facilities.

For more information please contact Rachel Korkoske (834-1848) or Jennie Morgan (834-1823), Go Green Co-Chairs.

