

“Alternative” Transportation the Way to Go

National Life Group – Alternative Transportation Incentives, Montpelier

National Life Insurance is a large Vermont-based company with a number of environmental projects and initiatives. One of the largest solar electric systems in Vermont provides the company with electricity and hot water, more than 90% of their heat is provided by a biomass boiler, and their shredded paper waste is used as bedding for cows at a local dairy farm. National Life is committed to making responsible decisions regarding the company’s use of resources, and they can ask their employees to make responsible decisions as well.

National Life’s Alternative Transportation Incentive program gives employees benefits for choosing to walk, bike, carpool or ride the bus to work. Each month, employees fill out a card where they keep track of how they get to and from work. If an employee averages one round trip each week that involves walking, biking, carpooling or riding the bus, he/she earns an incentive. Bicyclists can earn a free bike tune up; walkers and runners earn gift certificates to Onion River Sports; car poolers earn gas cards; and employees who take public transportation earn pass cards good for five round trips on local public transit. Additionally, participants in each category can enter their names in drawings to win sustainable promotional items.

Tim Shea, an executive at National Life, says that approximately 20 to 25 percent of employees participate in the program. Shea notes that in addition to the incentive program, National Life also encourages its employees to cut down on their fuel use by offering preferred parking to people who carpool. Also there are 40 parking spaces available for employees who drive fuel-efficient vehicles that average 35 miles per gallon or more. Parking spaces for efficient cars and incentives for efficient travel show that at National Life, “alternative” transportation is beginning to be the way to go.



Bill Brown

► Contact information:

Tim Shea
National Life Group
www.nationallife.com
tshea@nationallife.com
802-229-3559



School Lunch is Healthy for Kids and Their World

Warren School Cafeteria, Warren

What images does “school lunch” conjure up in your mind? Perhaps processed cheese and plastic utensils? If you’re a student at Warren Elementary School, you probably think more about vegetables from the school garden and home cooking. That’s because Claire Simpson, the cook at the Warren School, makes using local, fresh ingredients a priority.

Simpson, who has been the cook at Warren since 1992, grew up in New Zealand with parents who raised all of their own food. Now she and her husband do the same here in Vermont. They grow their vegetables and raise cows, chickens, pigs and sheep. While Simpson admits that she’s not, “totally nutty about never eating anything that is processed,” she says, “I do try to create as clean a diet as I can and feed it to my family and the school kids.”

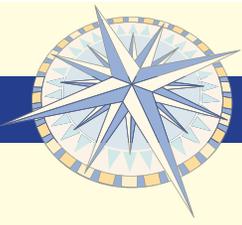
Everyday during Warren School lunches, Simpson’s philosophy about food is evident as students fill their plates with fresh salad greens and other vegetables. In the



Andreas Lehner

► Contact information:

Claire Simpson
The Warren School
www.warrenscool.org
802-496-2487



fall, Simpson uses the vegetables that are grown in the school's garden. She also buys vegetables and eggs from farmers in the Mad River Valley whenever possible, and brings in food from her own garden from time to time. Additionally, she purchases beef in bulk from local farmers, often a half-cow at a time from Elwin Neill in Waitsfield. She buys very inexpensive day-old bread from the Red Hen Bakery in Middlesex and the Warren Store. She heats it with a little water, "and it's just like fresh!" She also makes her own dough for stromboli, pizza and hamburger buns. Not only does Simpson think about where her food comes from, but also where the waste ends up. At the end of lunch, students throw their food waste into the "pig bucket," which Simpson then takes home with her. She feeds the food scraps to her personal pigs, which later feed her family.

Not only does Claire think about where her food comes from, but also where the waste ends up.



Job Training for a Green Future

Vermont Green Energy Training Partnership – Youth Program, Barre

One of the barriers to using alternative energy is the need to train people how to install, maintain and use new technologies. Vermont Green Energy Training Partnership has devised a way to do just that.

Through its Youth Program, Vermont Green helps young adults ages 16 to 22 living in difficult circumstances to gain access to trainings and certifications that lead to successful employment in green jobs. Case managers work with these young adults throughout the entire process, to help them identify their strengths and interests, create a plan, find trainings and, hopefully, to find a job. The case managers offer follow-up support as well. The jobs that program participants obtain include energy efficient construction and retrofit, renewable electric power production and recycling and waste reduction.

Julie Aitcheson, Vermont Green's Youth Program Statewide Coordinator, believes, "the best way to serve youth is through education." To that end, Vermont Green uses the Roots of Success curriculum to provide a foundation in environmental literacy to young adults seeking green jobs. One of the goals of Roots of Success is to "Create a more knowledgeable workforce and help green job seekers and community leaders grasp and make sense of deep concepts related to the connection between human activity and the environment." Not only does Vermont Green provide access to trainings in relation to green jobs specifically, but also they insure that participants in their program gain soft skills and job readiness skills to be valuable employees in any job. Just as the study of ecological concepts focuses on whole systems, Vermont Green's Youth Training Program considers the whole person when helping a young adult to prepare for the next generation of jobs.



100

Ellen Cheney

► Contact information:

Julie Aitcheson, Statewide Coordinator
 Vermont Green Youth Program
www.vtgreen.org
jaitcheson@wcysb.org