

# COMMUNITY-BASED ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS

## TWO STORIES OF SUCCESS



**Programs designed to meet the unique needs of diverse communities**

Community-based energy efficiency programs foster social connectedness to transform the way people consume energy—relying on group interaction, peer support, and communal resolve to impact behavior. A community can be defined by geography, such as a city or neighborhood, or by a shared characteristic, such as employees of a business, fans of a sport, or members of a social network.

### **Why do community-based programs work?**

The notion of "you're not alone, we're in this together" is a powerful concept capable of motivating consumers to make decisions or take action. Community-based programs drive behavior change by creating a societal platform that establishes awareness, encourages action, and reinforces a commitment to ongoing energy efficiency.



COMMUNITY

## How does WECC help?

WECC is a mission-driven nonprofit that designs and delivers real energy solutions for our clients. Community-based programs have long been a part of WECC's repertoire, dating back to 1992 with the introduction of Wisconsin's first community-targeted energy efficiency program.

WECC's team of industry experts successfully engages communities via the following strategies:

- **Turnkey approach:** We provide innovative, no-hassle services, including program design, implementation, marketing, community outreach, facilitation, evaluation, and program wrap-up.
- **Partnerships:** We foster bonding and the establishment of common ground with community leaders, groups, and members; utilities and regulators; schools and educators; trades; and financial institutions.
- **Training and education:** We provide community leaders, residents, businesses, trade allies, and financial institutions with the knowledge they need to get on board.
- **Quality control:** We're out in the field to elicit real-time feedback for continuous program improvement.
- **Outreach/events:** We plan and execute city and town hall meetings, fairs, festivals, open houses/grand openings, public gatherings, and online chats/events.
- **Recognition/acknowledgment:** We garner public exposure for your community/program with effective public relations efforts.

Highly successful community-based programs have one thing in common: they are designed to meet the unique and specific needs of each community. Communities are analyzed (with emphasis on citizen input) to determine the program design most likely to resonate with a population and produce the desired results. A customized approach helps capture a true sense of togetherness, pride, and ownership. The following programs showcase WECC's ability to address the specific compositions and goals of two vastly different communities.



## CASE STUDY 1: iCanConserve



**COMMUNITY MAKEUP:**  
Population less than  
15,000; moderate  
affluence; slightly rural;  
conservative majority.

## Background

WECC, partnering with Wisconsin Public Service Corporation (WPS) and the Citizens Utility Board (CUB), developed and implemented the iCanConserve Program—three community-based pilots (with each pilot containing eight to ten energy efficiency programs) in the WPS service territory. The innovative programs tested and evaluated methods to secure customer participation through community-based information sharing, education, and support. The goal of the pilots was to determine customer acceptance of the programs and their transferability to a large-scale service territory. The pilots launched in a staggered approach, beginning in Brillion, Wisconsin, in October 2009; Allouez, Wisconsin, in October 2010; and Plover, Wisconsin, in July 2011, all running through December 2012.

## Shining Stars

### » SCHOOL TO HOME

More than 500 students, teachers, and parents engaged in classroom sessions, continuing education courses, and learning tools (e.g., conservation kits, LED holiday light exchanges, and pledges). The program design emphasized bringing classroom lessons home to involve the whole family. Actively engaging teachers, students, and family members increased both the participant base and the lesson's entrenchment. Through smart design and trusted delivery, energy efficiency literacy and practices can be rooted in the minds and actions of school children, building tomorrow's energy leaders today.



**“I think, as teachers, we can make a big difference in helping the next generation become so much more knowledgeable when it comes to energy.”**

Judy Christianson, Brillion High School  
family consumer science teacher



**“It has become a mission of mine to reduce our energy bill and share this excitement with my own children. The world is their future and we need to take care of it.”**

Donna Hawse, Brillion High School  
special education teacher

## » WHOLE-HOUSE RETROFIT ENERGY ADVOCATES

The trust of a familiar face goes a long way. WECC hired and trained ten community members to serve as energy advocates—face-to-face primary contacts and “hand holders”—who guided homeowners step-by-step through the whole-house energy retrofit process. Additionally, local contractors were solicited to install energy efficiency measures in participants' homes. The physical presence of recognized members from the community helped participants feel an immediate sense of comfort with the program. More than 1,850 homeowners opened their doors to energy efficiency, generating more than \$1.3M in annual bill savings for those residents and \$4.6M in economic activity for trade allies in the community.

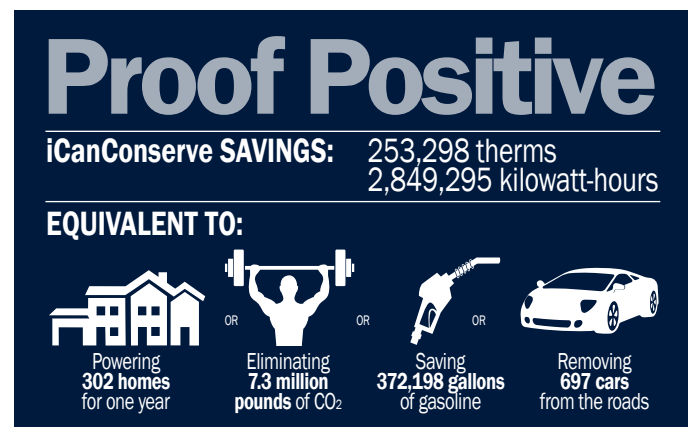
## » STUDENT INTERNSHIP

Seven college students pursuing energy or building-related fields of study were offered summer internships through iCanConserve. These interns performed energy audits and analyses on municipal buildings and schools within each of

the communities, prepared final reports, and presented to community leaders the data gathered and lessons learned. The information collected through the program was expected to assist communities with long-term energy management planning. Instead, it resulted in the immediate adoption of a number of recommended efficiency improvements, which generated direct energy and cost savings. Plus, with the mentorship of a professional energy advisor throughout the internship, the students learned beyond the text book, gaining real-world experience.

## » COMMUNITY REWARD

WECC worked with community stakeholders and local utility representatives to identify a community-serving energy efficiency project, with the value of the utility incentive based on their citizens' participation in iCanConserve. This "all for one, and one for all" approach ignited a true community spirit behind the project, and interest and excitement grew as progress was tracked through reports and signage. Nearing the program end, rallying efforts further united community members, successfully motivating individual homeowners and businesses to complete projects and act on recommendations to achieve the level of participation needed to earn the community reward. The result: energy-efficient outdoor lighting was installed at a local sports complex, a village park, and the city hall.



## Results

The WECC approach served the communities through:

- **Strategic partnership and network formation.** The program provided civic leaders, community members, educators, and local businesses with a common, positive goal to work towards together.
- **Economic development.** Participating businesses were highlighted for their efforts and profited from additional work.



## » INCENTIVE STRUCTURES AND LOAN OPTIONS

The upfront investment needed to implement energy efficiency projects that deliver at least a 15 percent reduction in energy use can be daunting, especially for medium to low-income families and small business owners. To make deep savings more affordable, WECC combined tiered incentives (higher rebates for deeper savings) with favorable loan options (below-market interest rates, loan terms that align with energy efficiency measure lifespan, and recognition of the value of energy savings in debt-to-income calculations). WECC established a unique partnership with a local lending institution by structuring a loan loss reserve to secure favorable terms for participants and a 20:1 leverage for the program—\$20 of capital available from the lender for every \$1 guaranteed by the program.

## » LED BY LOCAL PEOPLE

Engagement, trust, and cooperation are at the heart of every successful community program. WECC's approach is centered around leveraging the strength of the community—its citizens and businesses. WECC hired and trained community members as energy advocates who served as face-to-face primary contacts and “hand holders,” guiding participants through the whole-building energy retrofit process. The advocates' physical presence and personal connection with citizens helped build community spirit, increased trust and understanding, and assuaged doubts or fears. We employed local contractors, involved area retailers and distributors, and worked with the cities to implement community workforce agreements. Our “boots on the ground” approach supported local workforce development, increasing traffic for local businesses and creating jobs. Through this program, WECC helped generate more than \$40 million in economic activity for Wisconsin.

**“We were very impressed with the expertise and frank advice provided in the assessment report. It really provided a road map for us, prioritizing issues in a way that made sense and educating us about our home’s structure and systems in a way that we’d never thought about before.”**

Matt Lynch, Green Madison homeowner

## CASE STUDY 2: We² Program

**COMMUNITY MAKEUP:**  
Population greater than 200,000; low to high levels of affluence; highly urban; liberal majority.

### Background

WECC partnered with the cities of Milwaukee, Madison, and Racine to form the Wisconsin Energy Efficiency (We²) Program. Three community-based, whole-building retrofit programs (Me², Green Madison, and Re², respectively) were established with an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) through the federal Department of Energy (DOE). The programs offered financing options and direct incentives to drive overall energy savings of at least 15 percent within each participating home or business. We² ran from September 2010 through August 2013.

### Shining Stars

#### » NEIGHBORHOOD-SPECIFIC MARKETING

The residential markets in Milwaukee and Madison are very diverse. WECC worked with community leaders to create neighborhood-specific marketing and outreach efforts that addressed the varied nature of building stock and residents while remaining cost-effective. Health and safety issues, bilingual messaging, and financial offerings were strategically focused based on the needs of individual neighborhoods. Strong “local” community-centric messages—paired with individualized calls to action—were delivered by local energy advocates. As a result, 58 percent of households and 86 percent of businesses that completed an assessment implemented energy-saving projects that achieved at least a 15 percent reduction in total energy use. The personalized focus of the program helped produce a higher rate of project completion compared to a typical retrofit program.





**“The workers were great. They took pride in their work. They did a fantastic job with some of the problems they ran into, and completed projects on time as scheduled. From day one, I felt a tremendous difference in the comfort level of my home.”**

James T. Green, Me<sup>2</sup> homeowner



## Proof Positive

**We<sup>2</sup> SAVINGS:** 700,997 therms  
682,836 kilowatt-hours

### EQUIVALENT TO:



Powering  
**382 homes**  
for one year



Eliminating  
**9.2 million**  
pounds of CO<sub>2</sub>



Saving  
**471,198 gallons**  
of gasoline



Removing  
**881 cars**  
from the roads

## Results

The WECC approach served the communities by providing:

- **Relevant information.** Trusted local advisors and information geared to the specific needs of “sub-community” groups made choosing to act easier.
- **Workforce development.** Training, well-paid work, and community workforce agreements supported the development of careers that will take energy efficiency beyond the life of the program.
- **Creative financing solutions.** Favorable terms and local financing partners drove larger projects with deeper energy savings and positive financial returns.

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## WECC – your leader in community-based energy efficiency programming

Founded in 1980, WECC is a mission-driven nonprofit with expertise in the design and delivery of targeted, cost-effective energy efficiency and efficiency financing programs. We boast an impeccable record of transforming markets, garnering community engagement and satisfaction, and meeting and exceeding goals on time and within budget. We build programs and relationships that lead to lasting energy-saving behaviors. Contact us today to learn how we can assist you!