

## Sustainability Initiatives at AFC by Stuart Green, Sustainability Committee

In 2008 we began crafting a 20 year plan to make us a more sustainable organization. There have been (and will be) many challenges on the path to sustainability, but most of our projects have, so far, been quite successful. As we sit down this Winter to revise and update our long term goals, it seems like a good opportunity to revisit some of the things we have accomplished so far.

### 2009 Summary

All AFC employees were invited to participate in 'The Natural Step' training, which is an internationally recognized framework for sustainability planning. Using this process, we crafted our 20 year sustainability goals. We immediately reduced landfill output by strengthening in-store recycling programs. We gathered baseline information on store water usage and promoted municipal tap water and reusable water bottles. The flagship project to eliminate selling single-serving plastic water bottles was a great success. To share our process with owners we began a regular sustainability report in each newsletter. In addition, we purchased renewable energy certificates, reduced use of laminated signs, inventoried all cleaning agents and chemicals used, and reduced laundry services.

### 2010 Summary

We initiated a third party waste audit to get a better understanding of our trash and recycling streams. The audit showed that AFC's waste handling procedures were far above average for the region, but still a long way from our goal of producing zero waste. (In 2010 AFC recycled approximately three cubic yards of material for every one cubic yard sent to the landfill.) The Committee reorganized and identified a sustainability coordinator to track metrics, develop plans, and implement projects. Other projects for the year included an incentive program for sustainable employee transportation, encouraging staff and owner volunteerism, and hosting community outreach events.

### 2011 Summary

Our top goal this year was to reduce our landfill pickups by 50%. As of November 2011, we have eliminated approximately 28% of pickups. We accomplished this primarily by introducing durable-ware for our dine-in deli customers and reducing our waxed cardboard waste. In addition, we advanced our in-store recycling programs with a dedicated area for storing and sorting recyclables, additional recycling education for employees, and improved recycling infrastructure in work spaces. AFC initiated a pilot program with three of our largest growers to explore using reusable produce containers. Additional projects this year included a pilot program for employee composting and completion of a small garden on our campus, to provide fresh herbs to the Community Kitchen, provide garden-related outreach, and inspire would-be gardeners.

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