

SPOTLIGHT on Sustainability



Meet Climate "Champion of Change," Steve Beumer

"Change begins with a thousand small steps to make the difference we need in our communities."

What is the purpose of the White House "Champions of Change" program?

The program was created as an opportunity for the White House to feature individuals doing extraordinary things to empower and inspire members of their communities. I was honored to be one of 12 faith leaders who were recognized by the President on July 20, 2015, for grassroots efforts to green their communities and educate others on the social and moral implications of climate change.

What was your motivation for becoming a Climate "Champion of Change"?

When I was a child, one of my favorite pastimes was working on connect-the-dot puzzles. Our faith communities have many "dots" embedded in our traditions that address many issues. The environment is one of them. It is important to take the moral initiative and to cherish and protect the wonderful parts that make up all creation — the people, plants and animals that grace every corner of our amazing planet.

What have been some of the grassroots efforts that you have led to "green" your community?

I have inspired my church, St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church in Winter Park, to lower their ecological footprint by installing energy-efficient roofing and LED lighting. I also helped organize our first worship service dedicated specifically to Earth Day in April. In addition, I planted a demonstration garden last year with our school, which has led to a garden 10 times larger than the first one. Outside of the church, I have organized projects such as litter clean ups on public streets and storm-drain labeling to prevent trash from going into lakes around the neighborhood.

How have you educated others on the connection between moral and social justice, and environmental stewardship?

People of all faiths share a great reverence for nature's creation. I have helped other local faith communities integrate this understanding from their own faith perspective into pursuing a livable planet that can be sustained for future generations.

How can others get involved?

Spearhead a storm-drain labeling project in your own community! Contact the Orange County Environmental Volunteer & Internship Program at eVIP@ocfl.net for more information and to sign up for the monthly volunteer newsletter.

