

SU-SIFE helps local businesses ‘go green’

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The local business community is now a little more sustainable thanks to a new green business certification program that received support from nearly two dozen Syracuse University student volunteers.



Eight businesses graduated from the Green Core Company program on May 19. Bluepoint Environmental, Cooperative Federal Credit Union, dbdesign, Divine Renewable Energy, Roji Tea Lounge, Sustainable Office Solutions, The Tech Garden and Syracuse Real Foods Co-op were recognized during a graduation ceremony held in downtown Syracuse. Also praised during the ceremony, although unable to attend because they had already left campus for the summer, were the SU students that helped many of these

businesses throughout the certification process.

Twenty-three students from the SU chapter of *Students in Free Enterprise* (SIFE), based in the *Whitman School of Management*, were split into teams and paired with nearly all of the newly designated green businesses. “The students basically acted as consultants,” says Sierra Fogal ’11, former SU-SIFE president. “The businesses were responsive to working with the students and it was great to see business students tackle sustainability practices ‘in the field.’ It was good for the students, good for the environment and a really positive experience.” Starting last November, the teams of three or four SU-SIFE students began visiting the companies to help them evaluate and implement a variety of sustainable practices. This on-site work, sometimes occurring on a weekly basis, addressed areas such as waste/recycling, energy use and green cleaning.

“It was great to work with the SU-SIFE students,” says Diane Brandli, owner of dbdesign. “They helped to brainstorm ideas on what I could do to meet the certification requirements, and were very cheerful and very energetic through the whole process. They actually bought into the whole idea as well. They think this is a great thing.”

For SU-SIFE’s Zi Lin Liang, working with Brandli was an enlightening experience. “The program is beneficial for everyone involved,” says Liang. “Students learn about sustainability efforts that they can individually take, or larger companies can take. As for the participating companies, the collective reduction of heating, energy, paper and water costs will save them a

substantial amount of money. Finances aside, the companies set an example for homes and other companies to follow. Their goodwill efforts will put the companies in a positive light because customers will see they are dedicated to more than just profits.”

The Green Core Company program’s green business adviser, Frank Cetera, wants to grow the program so that a steady stream of businesses is continually working toward certification. Cetera is already gearing up for the next group of businesses to begin the program. He’s also actively recruiting students from other area colleges so they can join the SU-SIFE students in helping more businesses go green when school starts up again in the fall.

“It’s only natural for us all to expect businesses and employees located in green buildings and green cities to operate accordingly in their day-to-day actions,” says Cetera. “Businesses will play a key role in our region’s sustainable development and the Green Core Company program is a tool to help them make that commitment.”

Started in 2009 by the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Onondaga Community College (OCC), and launched in 2010 with a group of pilot businesses through an *SU Initiative grant*, the Green Core Company program provides a blueprint for businesses working to achieve green operations through reduced environmental and social impacts. The program also recognizes businesses that make a substantial effort to develop a culture of sustainability within their organization, while challenging the offense of “greenwashing” – the unregulated and improper use of the term and methodology of “green” for marketing advantage. For more information on the Green Core Company program, visit www.green-core-company.org.