

# County of Dane: Recognizes 2021 Climate Champions for efforts to address climate change locally

Posted on Saturday, Dec 4, 2021

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Today, Dane County officials toured Oregon School District's Forest Edge Elementary, the first net-zero energy school in Wisconsin, as part of an event celebrating Dane County's 2021 Climate Champions. In its first year of operation, the school produced more electricity than it used for all school activities, including heating and cooling.

The Climate Champions program through the Office of Energy and Climate Change (OECC) recognizes local entities that are leading on climate action. The aim is to celebrate local leadership in fulfilling the goals set forth in Dane County's Climate Action Plan, which commits Dane County to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 50% county-wide by 2030 and puts the county on a path to be carbon-neutral by 2050.

This year, Dane County recognized 48 Climate Champions from 29 organizations.

"Across Dane County, local businesses, municipalities, and non-profit organizations are doing vital work to reduce their emissions. The Climate Champions program enables us to recognize and celebrate those achievements and hopefully inspire additional action by other entities across the county," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi.

The Office of Energy & Climate Change recognizes achievements across nine categories, including:

- [Building Energy Use](#) – for entities with very energy efficient buildings.

- **[Fleet Operations](#)** – for entities with a fleet powered by clean fuels.
- **[Employee Commuting](#)** – for entities where the workforce commutes via bike, walking, transit or telecommuting.
- **[Water Saving Practices](#)** – for entities that have implemented practices to reduce water usage.
- **[Waste Diversion Practices](#)** – for entities that have strong waste diversion practices.
- **[Agricultural Practices](#)** – for farms with strong sustainability practices.
- **[Catalysts](#)** – for entities who help others take climate actions.
- **[GHG Emissions](#)** – for entities that have reduced their carbon footprint.
- **[Other](#)** – for entities who have taken actions that don't fit into other categories.

Entities that achieve Climate Champion status will receive signage and recognition on the [OECC website](#).

Within each category are four levels of distinctions, with four stars indicating the highest level of achievement in that category. In 2021, five entities—Artisan Dental, Epic, Forest Edge Elementary, Green Life Trading Company and WPPI Energy—achieved the highest level of achievement. In addition, five local entities—American Family Insurance, CUNA Mutual Group, Exact Sciences, Full Spectrum Solar and WPPI Energy—received awards in three or more categories.

“The 2021 Climate Champions are helping us accelerate climate action in Dane County. Their leadership is an inspiration to others and a critical part of helping us achieve our emission goals,” said Parisi.

**The full list of 2021 Dane County Climate Champions can be found below:**

- **Artisan Dental** is the first general dentistry in the US to be 100% carbon neutral. (4 Star/Emissions)
- **Epic** achieved two Climate Champion awards in 2021:
  - The Epic campus features about 43 acres of green roofs, in addition to several ponds, bioswale and stormwater structures. Epic has also invested in various water conservation measures and actively manages salt use on its campus. (4 Star/Water Conservation)
  - Epic utilizes one of North America's largest geothermal systems that provides heating and cooling to the campus for significant energy savings. (2 Star/Energy Use)

- **Green Life Trading Co.** achieved Climate Champion status in two categories:
  - All of the company's employees bike, walk or use mass transit to commute to and from work. (4 Star/Employee Commuting)
  - Green Life Trading Company's emissions are less than half the emissions of a comparable business. (2 Star/Emissions)
- **Oregon School District - Forest Edge Elementary** is the first net-zero energy school in Wisconsin. (4 Star/Energy Use)
- **WPPI Energy** achieved six Climate Champion awards in 2021:
  - WPPI Energy pivoted to telecommuting in 2021. The company updated its personnel policies and offered support for home office set-ups. (4 Star/Employee Commuting)
  - WPPI Energy's office in Sun Prairie is LEED Gold certified and features a geothermal heating and cooling system as well as a solar array. (2 Star/Energy Use)
  - WPPI Energy has planted native grasses and used permeable pavement to reduce runoff. They have also invested in a variety of water-saving technologies. (2 Star/Water Conservation)
  - Through use of renewable electricity, strong efficiency measures and a commitment to telecommuting, WPPI Energy's corporate emissions are less than half that of a comparable company. (2 Star/Emissions)
  - WPPI Energy's Sustainability & Energy Management Policy addresses recycling, waste management and sustainable purchasing. (1 Star/Waste Management)
  - WPPI Energy supports the sustainability goals of various local governments. WPPI Energy provides electricity and support services to member communities. (Catalyst)
- **American Family Insurance** achieved five Climate Champion awards in 2021:
  - American Family Insurance diverts more than 75% of its waste from the landfill. (3 Star/Waste Management)
  - American Family Insurance uses sustainable land management practices. The company focuses on native ecosystems restoration and management, invasive species control, wildlife habitat programs, employee education, winter salt reduction, and integrated pest management. The company is actively managing more than 100 acres of prairie, grasslands, oak savannah and wetlands in Dane County. (3 Star/Other)
  - American Family Insurance's Spark building is LEED Gold certified and features a green roof that reduces energy use and diverts storm water. (1

- Star/Energy Use)
- As part of the company's broader efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, American Family Insurance conducted a survey of employee commuting patterns in 2020 and updated personnel policies to encourage more telecommuting. The company also offers covered bike storage, showers and lockers and EV charging for employees. (1 Star/Employee Commuting)
  - American Family Insurance's emissions are 25% less than a comparable business. The company has committed to net zero emissions by 2030. (1 Star/Emissions)
  - **Sun Prairie Area School District** achieved 2021 Climate Champion status for two schools:
    - Sun Prairie's Creekside Elementary School features a geothermal heating and cooling system and uses less than 25% of the energy consumed by a typical elementary school. (3 Star/Energy Use)
    - Sun Prairie East High School features a geothermal heating and cooling system and uses about 30% as much energy as a comparable high school. (2 Star/Energy Use)
  - **EnTech Solutions**, a division of Faith Technologies, is transforming dairy manure into renewable energy via anaerobic digestion. Site updates are underway and will be completed by the end of 2021, after which the facility will produce renewable natural gas (RNG) that will be injected into a pipeline at the Dane County landfill. The RNG will be used in the transportation sector to provide a clean burning vehicle fuel and help offset greenhouse gas emissions from traditional fossil fuels. RNG from dairy manure can reduce GHG emissions up to 400% when it is used to replace traditional vehicle fuel derived from fossil fuel sources. The facility updates also include integrating 2.8 MW of solar and distributed energy technology to produce clean electricity for use at the facility. This project is in partnership with Northern Biogas. (3 Star/Other)
  - **Full Spectrum Solar** achieved Climate Champion status in four categories:
    - Full Spectrum Solar's headquarters on East Washington features a solar array that provides most of the electricity used for Full Spectrum's operations, the charging of two electric vehicles and a small manufacturing operation at the site. (3 Star/Energy Use)
    - In addition to strong water conservation and anti-salt practices, Full Spectrum Solar has planted hundreds of plants to catch rainwater. (3 Star/Water Conservation)
    - Almost a third of Full Spectrum employees bike, carpool, walk or

- telecommute, and the company has seven strategies to encourage employees to use these green commuting strategies. (3 Star/Employee Commuting)
- Full Spectrum has two electric vehicles and two plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. (1 Star/Fleet)
  - **Village of McFarland** will have a new Public Safety Center, which will be a net-zero building featuring geothermal heating and cooling and solar arrays. (3 Star/Other)
  - **City of Middleton Operations and Facilities** has cut winter salt use by about half in the last year. (2 Star/Other)
  - **City of Sun Prairie** has established a Sustainability Committee, created a new staff position solely focused on advancing sustainability efforts, and invested in public engagement around sustainability issues. (2 Star/Other)
  - **CUNA Mutual Group** achieved Climate Champion status in three categories:
    - CUNA Mutual Group has invested in water conservation measures and green infrastructure. (2 Star/Water Conservation)
    - CUNA Mutual Group's 5710 Mineral Point Road facility has been ENERGY STAR certified 6 of the last 7 years. (2 Star/Energy Use)
    - CUNA Mutual Group's 5910 Mineral Point Road facility has been ENERGY STAR certified 6 of the last 7 years. (2 Star/Energy Use)
  - **Exact Sciences** achieved Climate Champion status in three categories:
    - Exact Sciences has shown leadership in developing innovative recycling solutions that reduce energy and water consumption while increasing recycling. (3 Star/Other)
    - Exact Sciences actively manages its water softeners and winter salt use to reduce chloride in our lakes. The company has also invested in green infrastructure and water conservation measures. (2 Star/Water Conservation)
    - Exact Sciences minimizes waste generation and invests in innovative recycling efforts. (1 Star/Waste Management)
  - **Madison Computer Works** has half of its fleet running on electric energy. The other half of the fleet is hybrid. (2 Star/Fleet)
  - **Madison Gas & Electric** received recognition for its ongoing efforts to reduce emissions associated with electricity production. MGE has added 84 MW of solar generation capacity in the last two years. (2 Star/Other)
  - **Village of Shorewood Hills** became the first village in Wisconsin to get 100% of the power for its local government operations from renewable energy sources. (2 Star/Other)

- **Zoe's Pizzeria** in Waunakee has four of its six vehicles running on electric energy. (2 Star/Fleet)
- **350 Madison** received recognition for its efforts to connect local citizens with climate policymakers at the state, county and municipal levels. (1 Star/Other)
- **St. John's Lutheran Church** has partnered with multiple groups to create sustainable gardens around their building. (1 Star/Other)
- **All Energy Solar** received recognition for its ability to bring solar energy to Dane County residents. All Energy Solar completed about 50 projects in Dane County in 2020. (Catalyst)
- **City of Middleton Sustainability Committee** received recognition for its efforts to help residents upgrade to LED lighting. The Committee worked in partnership with the Middleton High School Green Team and the St. Bernard Catholic Church Green Team to distribute almost 2,000 LED lights and recycle more than 2,300 CFL light bulbs. (Catalyst)
- **Everlight Solar** received recognition for bringing solar energy to Dane County households. In 2020 Everlight Solar completed a total of 510 installations in Dane County. (Catalyst)
- **Habitat for Humanity** about 15 new homes every year in Dane County, with an emphasis on energy efficiency. In 2021, Habitat installed a 27.75 kW solar array on its headquarters, which it is using as a teaching opportunity for Habitat staff and volunteers who are interested in going solar. (Catalyst)
- **Middleton High School Green Team** received recognition for their efforts to help Middleton residents replace their fluorescent and incandescent lightbulbs with LED lightbulbs. They worked in partnership with the Middleton Sustainability Committee and St. Bernard Catholic Church Green Team to distribute almost 2,000 LED lights and recycle more than 2,300 CFL light bulbs. This year, they are seeking to reduce fast fashion in the student body, visit elementary schools, put sustainability tips on the TV screens, and recycle writing utensils, single-use masks, batteries, and plastic bags. (Catalyst)
- **Project Home** received recognition for their efforts to help households reduce energy and water usage. The local provider for the Low Income Weatherization Assistance Program, Project Home helped about 200 households reduce their energy use in 2020, despite the pandemic. The agency also collaborates with Madison Water Utility to promote water conservation and does regular outreach to encourage conservation across our communities. (Catalyst)
- **Rosen Nissan Madison** received recognition for their efforts to sell the all-electric Nissan Leaf. Nissan has recognized Rosen Nissan as the #1 Leaf dealership in the Midwest region. (Catalyst)

- **St. Bernard Catholic Church Creation Care Team** received recognition for their efforts to help Middleton residents upgrade to LED lighting. The St. Bernard Green Team worked in partnership with the City of Middleton's Sustainability Committee and Middleton High School Green Team to distribute almost 2,000 LED lights and recycle more than 2,300 CFL lightbulbs. (Catalyst)
- **Zimbrick Volkswagen of Madison** received recognition for their enthusiastic efforts to promote VW's new all-electric ID4. In less than a year the dealership has already sold dozens of vehicles. (Catalyst)

To learn more about the 2021 Climate Champions, visit the Dane County of Energy and Climate Change [website](#) and the related [Climate Champions map](#).