



SPOTLIGHT ON... LIFE SOURCE NATURAL FOODS

AT A GLANCE

LifeSource Natural Foods
2649 Commercial St. SE
Salem, OR 97302
503.361.7973
lifesourcenaturalfoods.com

Greening an already green business

WHAT THEY DO:

Sell organic and other sustainably produced produce, food and goods

HOW LIFESOURCE WENT BEYOND LIGHTING:

Installed energyefficient lighting in coolers and spotlights throughout the store and outside

Water usage:

Installed low-flow toilets and sink faucets

Bulk purchasing:

In addition to switching to bulk for their own cleaning supplies, LifeSource encourages consumers to eschew packaging by offering an extensive bulk food selection

Recycling:

Offers recycling in public areas; recycles all food waste, including inedible food

Green energy:

Solar panels offset about \$3,700 of its electricity bill and wind power supplies the rest.



LifeSource Natural Foods is the place in Salem to get organic produce, healthy prepared foods, and packaged foods without artificial ingredients, preservatives or trans fats. Shoppers can also pick up cleaning products without toxic chemicals; supplements for optimal health; and books for healthful meals and homes.

In a nutshell, LifeSource is looking out for the well-being of its community.

The Commercial Street SE store also is a perfect example of a business taking care of the well-being of the earth. As the sustainability coordinator, Michelle Suess analyzes the company's practices for ways to make them more environmentally friendly. It's not easy, she admits, because LifeSource has always been run with an eye toward energy conservation and ecofriendliness thanks to owner Alex Beamer.

Still, Suess has been able to find gains recently that have reduced water use and energy and—in the end—saved money.

At the start of 2011, LifeSource replaced old toilets in both of its bathrooms with dual-flush toilets that save at least a gallon of water on each flush. On nine sinks, aerated faucets replaced the old waterhogging kind – saving almost a gallon of water per minute. For the year, the store reduced its water use by 27 percent, saving 270,000 gallons of water compared to the previous year. The reduction saves LifeSource \$800 annually on its water bill.



Sustainability guru Michelle Suess

By being able to include all food waste in the green yard debris bins, LifeSource has been able to reduce their garbage significantly. Produce often is packed in ice within waxed cardboard containers. Those containers would end up in the

garbage because they can't be recycled. Now, they are flattened and composted. This change alone has allowed LifeSource to shift 360 gallons of garbage to compost a week. All of the paper towels used in the deli area – some of which may be smeared with food – can now go in the compost bin as well.

A store as large as LifeSource needs to be well lit, but all of those lights are an enormous energy drain. This year, LifeSource will look into upgrades including a system to eliminate some overhead lighting and to rely on focused lighting directed toward individual shelves. In the meantime, between 40 and 50 spotlights were replaced with LED (light-emitting diode) spotlights outside and inside



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Low-flow toilets save at least a gallon per flush



LED lights replaced less efficient lights in all of the store's coolers.



LifeSource encourages consumers to eschew packaging by offering an extensive bulk food selection.

the store. Old coolers were replaced with new, more efficient coolers complete with LED lighting. Suess estimates the switch will save the company about \$850 a year in electricity costs.

The LED switch comes on the heels of an already amazing commitment to energy reduction and clean energy at LifeSource. In 2008, LifeSource installed 162-watt solar panels that offset about \$3,700 a year of its electricity bill. The remainder of the electricity purchased by LifeSource is wind power.

Their recycling system is no less comprehensive. In addition to sorting all of their paper, cardboard and plastics, LifeSource separates materials that have special recycling needs.

The film plastic – from shrink wrapped yogurt containers, for example – is picked up by plastics recycler Agri-Plas.

All edible items pulled from shelves in the deli or produce department are offered to staff and then given to several area nonprofits. All inedible food such as moldy bread, vegetable scraps and rotten produce gets picked up by local chicken

or pig farmers or home compost enthusiasts.

While LifeSource recycles comprehensively, Suess understands that not generating the material in the first place is the most environmentally friendly option. LifeSource works with buyers to ensure that the companies that supply the store have solid environmental practices and little packaging. If there is excessive packaging, LifeSource simply doesn't carry it.

Almost all of their paper products and cleaning supplies are purchased in bulk to eliminate unnecessary packaging. A 2011 switch in the all-purpose cleaner used by LifeSource employees saves 28 plastic spray bottles per year and about \$20 for every five gallons ordered.

Eggs, milk and some produce are delivered in reusable tubs that LifeSource stores to return to the company.

Bulk purchases extend to the customers as well. LifeSource showcases a bountiful bulk department partly to help customers reduce the amount of packaging brought into their own homes. To encourage customers to bring reusable bags, LifeSource offers a 5- or 10-cent per bag credit. In keeping with their community commitment, that credit can be donated to a variety of nonprofits featured by LifeSource.

"We are a family here," Suess said. "And we are a family within the family of the community. We need to take care of each other and our customers and the community we live in."

EarthWISE Certification

LifeSource Natural Foods became an EarthWISE certified business in December of 2010. LifeSource is the only grocery store among the over 100 EarthWISE businesses and organizations in Marion County.



WANT TO DO THIS AT YOUR BUSINESS?

Marion County's EarthWISE program can help. Visit mcEarthwise.net, call 503.365.3188 or email Earthwise@co.marion.or.us