Sustain Dane is the sustainability organization of Dane County. Our programs, partnerships, and initiatives advance the greater Madison region into a thriving place with environmental health, equity and social well-being, and a just economy.

Holistic sustainability can successfully guide us through the challenges and opportunities ahead as we build a more resilient and inclusive community. Through our network and beyond, we see that change happens when inspired people take action.

Sustain Dane’s vision is a thriving and inclusive community with a sustainable environment and economy we are proud to pass on to future generations. Our mission is to inspire, connect, and support people to accelerate equity and sustainable actions for community well-being.
MEET THE TEAM

CLAIRE OLEKSIAK  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

LORENZA ZEBELL  
PROGRAM MANAGER

LUCIA HUNT  
DEVELOPMENT & PARTNERSHIPS MANAGER

MAGGIE RADL  
COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

VALORA GUTIERREZ  
EFFICIENCY NAVIGATOR & NOAH OUTREACH SPECIALIST

KAI BRITO  
MULTI MEDIA SPECIALIST

INTERNS

AMANDA HALZEL  
PYPER SCULLEN  
TREY OWEN  
SONIA HOLSEN

JOIE ZHANG  
CHRISY RAMAKRISHNAN  
JAMIE GREY
“Maximize meaning and minimize carbon,” writes Kimberly Nicholas, Sustain Dane Summit 2021 keynote speaker and author of Under the Sky We Make: How to be Human in a Warming World. As partners, members, and program participants you help grow the passion and inspiration for sustainable action. Together our work moves us toward a healthier planet and community well-being. The Sustain Dane team is energized and effective; your support makes our work possible.

- Education & Connection: 600+ sustainability projects by individuals and organizations grew from our initiatives and support in past 10 yrs.
- Housing & Energy: 100+ affordable apartments improving energy efficiency to address housing resilience, equity, and climate change.
- Recycling: 500+ course participants whose outreach projects have touched 44,000+ people.
- Schools: 10 schools teaching the next generation of sustainability stewards about reducing food waste, recycling, & more.
- Partnerships: New initiatives with bilingual energy leaders; reducing vehicle miles traveled and increasing wellness with COVID recovery; beneficial electrification; and climate, health, & equity connections.

I see the impact of Sustain Dane’s programs when Jean sends us a video of herself teaching her granddaughters how to recycle; when Souad comments that she saw a reduction in her apartment utility bills from energy efficiency measures; when Baltazar shares that the Bilingual Leadership graduates want to continue sustainability work; and when Deb says that a program was “alive with possibilities.”

“There is incredible momentum at Sustain Dane; making a profound difference in what our community needs to meet the climate and equity challenges of today and benefit future generations” – Sandy Xiong, City of Sun Prairie Strategic Planning and Engagement Manager

Change happens when inspired people take action.

Sincerely,
Claire Schaefer Oleksiak
Executive Director, Sustain Dane
Our Accelerate Sustainability Workshop (ASW) is a professional development opportunity designed to help start sustainability initiatives at businesses and organizations. Grounded in current sustainability plans and research, this workshop presents best practices, local case studies, and change-making strategies. Participants leave with an action plan for projects to make change at their organizations. The program is an evolution of the MPower program.

Each organization committed to completing a project in the categories of energy efficiency, renewable energy, food, transportation, waste, water, and equity & wellness. These 21 organizations were primarily new to our programs. In post-workshop feedback, 100% of participants responded that they would recommend the workshop to a colleague.

Participants:
- Affiliated Engineers, Inc
- Movin-Out Inc
- CG Schmidt
- DC Engineering
- Destination Madison
- Extreme Engineering Solutions
- First United Methodist Church
- Alzheimer’s & Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin
- Habitat ReStore of Dane County
- Ho-Chunk Gaming Madison
- National Decision Support Company
- Mad City Dream Homes
- Mead & Hunt
- Middleton Sustainability Committee
- Kahler Slater
- Nowak Eco Properties
- REAP Food Group
- Reynolds Transfer & Storage
- TDS Telecom
- The Digital Ring
- Wingra School
The Sustainable Breakfast Series highlights current sustainability topics through expert speakers and skill-building opportunities. Breakfast meetings are attended by regional business leaders and individuals who care about integrating environmental, social, and economic sustainability into their professional and personal actions.

Featuring: Jalonne L. White-Newsome, formerly Senior Program Officer, Kresge Foundation and currently CEO/Founder, Empowering a Green Environment and Economy, LLC and Michael Mucha, Chief Engineer And Director at the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District.

Jalonne L. White-Newsome covered how The Kresge Foundation approaches this work and national case studies from the Climate Resilient and Equitable Water Systems program (CREWS). Michael Mucha added local context of the Sewerage District approach to their work, the water system, and sustainability.

Featuring: Jess Guffey Calkins, Community Food Systems Educator with Extension Dane County; Elena Terry, Executive Chef & Founder of Wild Bearies; Kingsley Gobourne, Artemis Provisions and Cheese; and Claire Strader, Organic Vegetable Educator for Extension Dane County and FairShare CSA Coalition.

Four local food leaders talked about the intersection of food production, sourcing, and supporting diverse businesses in our region. Jess presented data and background knowledge on what we see produced and sold locally. Elena shared indigenous food knowledge and perspective on resilient food systems. Kingsley spoke about experience starting Artemis Provisions and Cheese and Claire spoke about how community supported agriculture (CSA) has evolved this year.
Our July Sustainable Breakfast featured an inspiring conversation about the path of local leaders and organizations to achieve their carbon goals with carbon neutral operations and net-zero buildings. The panel discussed the successes and challenges they encountered while working toward their visions. The case studies and innovation could support others looking at carbon neutrality and building energy reduction projects.

“People are afraid to be first since there are risks, but there are risks in doing nothing.” —Francisco Sayu, President/Founder of Sustainable Community Partners, LLC

**PATHWAYS TO CARBON NEUTRALITY**
**July 2021**

Featuring: Christie Baumel, Deputy Mayor at City of Madison; Andy Weiland, Business Manager at Oregon School District; Francisco Sayu, President and Founder of Sustainable Community Partners LLC and BikEquity; and Scott Andersen, Director of Stakeholder Stewardship at Artisan Dental.

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**YOUTH IN THE SUSTAINABILITY MOVEMENT**
**October 2021**

Featuring: Daphne Wu, Middleton High School student and Founder of Dane County Youth Environmental Committee; Isabel LoDuca, University of Michigan student and American Family Insurance Institute for Corporate Social Impact Intern; Yvett Sanchez, University of Wisconsin-Madison student and Co-President of Re-Wear It Wisco (a student organization promoting sustainable fashion); and Kalyanna (Yanna) Williams, Founder & Director of K. Williams Consulting and Dear Diary Mentoring for Black Girls.

The panel of emerging leaders shared how they are approaching climate action as youth in the sustainability movement. The conversation covered their journeys, the causes they are championing, and how they encourage others to get involved. They are taking action and creating positive change.
This year we launched our recycling education program in partnership with the City of Madison Streets Division and with support from the Carton Council. In this program, attendees learn about how the recycling system works, how to figure out if an item is or isn’t recyclable locally, and how to reduce and reuse before recycling. After learning together, participants took their knowledge out into the community.

The program had 524 participants and outreach projects reached an estimated 44,532 local people with recycling knowledge. The course was paired with an outreach campaign including two videos (one with the UW Bucky Badger mascot), an educational social media campaign, a website page, and two billboards featuring the slogan ‘Recycle Better.’
Throughout the year, our community convenes four times for lunchtime networking. Networking offers a welcoming venue to connect with members of other established or emerging green teams and sustainability committees, and discuss sustainability successes and challenges.

**Volunteer & Community Building Events**

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The Efficiency Navigator program in partnership with Elevate helps small to medium-sized multifamily housing become more efficient, affordable, and resilient while reducing operating costs for owners and energy cost burden for residents. The program provides complimentary efficiency assessments and step-by-step navigation of implementation for renter-occupied buildings with rents affordable to residents at or below 80% Area Median Income.

In 2021, we received funding from the WI Public Service Commission Office of Energy Innovation to support 100 units of affordable housing on Madison’s Northside and Southwest Side with energy assessments, coordination with contractors, and grants of $10,000 - $20,000 to fund implementation of measures. We have also incorporated water softener optimization and incentivized replacement in multifamily buildings with support from the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage.

We also participated in an electrification scoping study for Dane County Office of Energy and Climate Change that included Dane County housing and utility data analysis and 15 stakeholder interviews about electrification and cold-climate air source heat pumps perspectives and experiences.
Latino Academy of Workforce Development (LAWD) partnered with Sustain Dane (SD) and Elevate to integrate energy efficiency education to their Bilingual Leadership Academy in order to pilot a program to train bilingual energy efficiency facilitators, as envisioned in the Climate Action Plan. This program, funded by the Clean Energy grant through Dane County Office of Energy and Climate Change has been successful as a model for building trusted, equitable and deeply collaborative relationships that lead to models of community based climate engagement and education.

Throughout 2021, we co-created and piloted this curriculum. The bilingual leadership academy grew leaders who are inspired and equipped to engage their friends, families and neighbors in learning about energy efficiency and saving through home visits, assistance with ordering Focus on Energy Kits and helping kids and families learn about opportunities in the energy sector.
Consumo de Energía Renovable

- Energías renovables que podemos utilizar por ejemplo
- La energía solar por medio de los paneles solares
- El viento para generar electricidad
- La hidráulica que es la energía que produce las Corrientes de agua
In partnership with the Greater Madison MPO, this program focused on understanding the opportunities and challenges of long-term teleworking options as a component of reducing vehicle miles traveled in Dane County. The Dane County Climate Action Plan targets a 15% reduction in vehicle miles traveled by 2050. We worked with a cohort of local businesses, organizations, and individuals, conducted interviews, formed a Telework Business Team, and identified teleworking best practices.

YWCA - Madison & Ho-Chunk Gaming Madison partnered with Sustain Dane on a study to assess the intersection of climate, health and equity in Dane County and the impact of YTransit shared transit program as a climate solution. The project included 72 surveys and interviews. One of the most important themes that emerged is that climate solution projects must be connected to bettering the foundation of people’s lives, which was highlighted in this project to be mental health, housing, food, and transportation. The partnership also began conversations with MGE about conducting a fleet analysis around the costs and carbon impact of converting the YTransit fleet to electric vehicles.
This past year, we continued our work within the Madison Metropolitan School District with an expansion of a mealtime recycling program and the beginning of a food waste program. Our team is piloted a recycling program at two area elementary schools. The pilot focused on carton recycling in the classroom and a hallway recycling station model. Additionally, we started work with five area schools to conduct food waste audits that included quantitative and qualitative data measurement. Students learned about sustainability through a video we created on food waste and participating in the food waste audits.
Winter is Alive! is a community-based multi-disciplinary program featuring temporary 30+ public art and 20+ virtual events focused on education and reflection on climate change. The project aimed to cultivate discussion, education, and action on climate change through the arts; activate outdoor places during winter; and provide exhibition and employment opportunities to artists. Winter is Alive was presented by the City of Madison Arts Commission, Garver Events, and Sustain Dane, as well as the collective endeavor of many individuals and organizations.
SUMMIT & CLIMATE ACTIONS

Weaving Stories for Change

At the 2021 Summit we hosted 225+ Participants, celebrated 20+ Award Nominees, and were inspired by 10+ Speakers. Attendees made 140+ climate commitments to complete an action and reflect on it through Earth Day 2022. Actions will be in the categories of Food, Transportation, Energy, Ripple Effect, Investments, and Other.
"Sustain Dane truly speaks to the intersectionality of our environmental and societal issues. Their programs inspire us and help us find ways to all work together." —Michelle Probst, Summit Survey Respondent

Keynote: Kimberly Nicholas, climate scientist and author of "Under the Sky We Make, How to Be Human in a Warming World" in an interview with Raj Shukla, Midwest Director of Freshwater Policy.

Local Leaders Panel:
- Angela Russell, Chief Diversity Officer, CUNA Mutual Group
- Letesha Nelson, Chief Executive Officer, Goodman Community Center
- Baltazar De Anda Santana, Executive Director, Latino Academy of Workforce Development
- Christopher Kilgour, Founder, Color in the Outdoors

Live Forward Awardees:
- Elena Terry, Founder/Executive Chef, Wild Bearies Catering
- Tara Wilhelmi, Founder and Lead Peer Specialist, Each One Teach One
- Kristie Goforth, Executive Director, Free Bikes 4 Kidz Madison
- Oscar Mireles, Director, Omega School
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- YWCA – Madison

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- Dane County Environmental Council
- Downtown Madison Inc.
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- Wisconsin Energy Institute

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Audited financials and 990s are available upon request.