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September 2026 Newsletter

Sustain Dane is the sustainability organization of Dane County. Join us and get involved in accelerating community well-being.



Sarah Lloyd
Research Coordinator
UW Madison



Michelle Orge
President & Executive Director
Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin

Ingredients to a Sustainable Food System

2026 Sustain Dane Summit Keynote + Agenda

Our 2026 Summit Keynote Session Ingredients to a Sustainable Food System, will give us a deeper understanding and actions needed for a more resilient and sustainable food system. Creating meaningful climate solutions requires both individual actions and systemic change. This year's Summit will explore how these approaches work together, using our food system as a powerful example of how everyday choices, community initiatives, and broader policies can collectively shape a more sustainable future.

The keynote will feature Sarah Lloyd, a farmer, researcher, and rural sociologist, and Michelle Orge, President and Executive Director of Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin. Together, they will explore the environmental, economic, and social connections that can create a more sustainable and resilient future.

Join us for the 2026 Summit at the Monona Terrace on Friday, November 6. Register today! Below is our agenda for the day:

- 8:00 AM — 8:45 AM **Arrival, Breakfast, & Networking**
- 8:45 AM — 10:30 AM **Keynote: Ingredients to a Sustainable Food System**
- 10:30 AM — 11:00 AM **Break & Networking**
- 11:00 AM — 11:45 PM **Local Businesses Taking Action in Sustainability**
- 11:45 PM — 1:00 PM **Lunch, Raffle, & Networking**
- 1:00 PM — 2:00 PM **On the Menu: Chefs & Sustainability**
- 2:00 PM — 2:45 PM **Year in Review: Data Centers, Composting, & Building Energy Savings Program**
- 2:45 PM — 3:00 PM **Live Forward Awards**
- 3:00 PM **Closing & Networking**

Register for the 2026 Summit here



September Sustainable Breakfast Series

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Our September Sustainable Breakfast Series focused on our energy grid. Representatives from MGE discussed the local energy system, the transition to net-zero carbon electricity, renewable energy and battery storage, grid reliability, energy markets, and planning for future energy needs. Highlights include:

- MGE is continuing to work toward their goal of net-zero carbon electricity by 2050, and by 2030 they plan to have added more than 40 renewable generation and battery storage projects since 2015.
- As we transition to more clean energy, it will take more than just renewable generation. Transmission infrastructure and regional coordination are critical to keep up demand for the changing grid.
- Looking ahead, new energy technologies and partnerships, including MGE's recent partnership with Realta Fusion, will play a large role in the region's future energy system.

Our speakers included MGE representatives: Dave Benforado, Senior Manager of Community Services, Brenda Sargent, Director of Sustainability and Environmental Affairs, and Nick Schroeder, Director of Energy Planning and Market Operations.

Stay tuned for a podcast on this program coming soon.



September Volunteer Session Recap

At Prairie Ridge Conservation Park, Sustain Dane volunteers identified various native species of plants including purple coneflowers and rattlesnake master. By collecting seeds, volunteers help preserve Wisconsin's native plants for years to come.

Volunteers collected seeds as the Madison Parks team prepares to conduct a prescribed fire at the conservation park. Prescribed fires recycle nutrients back to the soil and promote the growth of trees and native species. After the fire, the Madisons Parks ecologists will reseed the area with the seeds that were collected from our volunteers.

A big thank you to all the volunteers, including Sustain Dane members Catalent, and Madison Parks for leading such an engaging and impactful experience! Sustain Dane offers volunteer opportunities throughout the year. Stay tuned for the 2027 volunteer schedule.



Verona AADC

All Around Dane County - Verona Recap

At the Verona Town Hall, we hosted our first All Around Dane County of the year. In the new town hall building, which has a solar array that offsets 75% of the town's electricity, we heard from Verona Area School District, the Farley Center, Friends of Badger Mill Creek Conservancy, Dark Skies Verona, Sustain Verona, and the City of Verona Sustainability Task Force.

Participants had the chance to network, view the solar installation on the town hall building, and stroll around the native prairie. The evening was filled with

learning and connection. Join us at our next All Around Dane County in Middleton on October 13.

Renewing Members



Green Box, LLC
Middleton Chamber of Commerce
Society of St. Vincent de Paul
Sun Prairie Area School District
True North Collective

Uniek Inc.
UW-Madison Office of Sustainability
Village of McFarland
Wisconsin Green Muslims

SUSTAIN DANE MEMBERSHIP

Renewed Member Recognition

Sustain Dane recognizes businesses, organizations, and individuals who value sustainability and are a part of our membership. Sustain Dane membership offers inspiring education and professional development, powerful connections through networking and volunteering, and customized support to help you accelerate sustainability actions.

Membership is rolling throughout the year, and all are welcome to join. Recent renewed members include:

- Green Box, LLC
- Middleton Chamber of Commerce
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul
- Sun Prairie Area School District
- True North Collective
- Uniek Inc.
- UW-Madison Office of Sustainability
- Village of McFarland
- Wisconsin Green Muslims
- + 2 Individual Members



Efficiency Navigator Update

Through Efficiency Navigator, Sustain Dane and partners support small to medium-sized affordable apartment housing to become more efficient, affordable, and resilient.

We recently completed work on a duplex property built in 1965 in Madison's Sandburg neighborhood. Efficiency upgrades include air sealing and insulation. These improvements will have an estimated $615 in annual utility cost savings for residents and an annual CO2 emissions savings of 3,033kg. This is the equivalent of avoiding 7,524 vehicle miles traveled, and an estimated 39% reduction in overall energy usage.

Learn more about Efficiency Navigator here



Last Month of Farmers' Market Food Scrap Drop-off

Together we have diverted more than 31,040 lbs pounds of food scraps from the landfill so far this season. That's a little more than the weight of 15 giraffes.

Help us reach our goal of 24 giraffes by bringing your the farmers' market food scrap drop-off runs through the end of October and beginning of November. We look forward to seeing fall favorites like squash and pumpkins at the food scrap drop-offs.

- Capitol View Farmers' Market
  - Last day: Wednesday, October 14
- South Madison Farmers' Market
  - Last day: Tuesday, October 27
- Eastside Farmers' Market
  - Last day: Tuesday, October 27
- Westside Community Farmers' Market
  - Last day: Saturday, November 7

Do you want to continue recycling food scraps during the winter? Check out the Dane County Scrap Stop Locations in Madison, Middleton, Fitchburg, McFarland, and Verona. You can stop by any of the farmers' markets to learn more about your winter options!

Learn more about drop off sites & winter options here



Sonali's Round Trips Smart Trips Challenge

This month Sonali took part in Round Trips Smart Trips Challenge. Throughout September, Sonali challenged herself to choose alternative transportation whenever possible, from taking the bus to the office, biking to her sister's house, and walking to the grocery store. With a little extra motivation from the challenge, she found herself looking for more opportunities to leave her car at home. By choosing to bus, bike, and walk she saved over 120lbs of CO2 and traveled over 180 miles throughout the month of September.

Here are couple of resources she found helpful:

- Use the transit app, having the right tools for planning a commute via bus is important. Sonali took the bus to the airport for a trip recently and it helped her get there right on time.
- Check out the bike repair station map if you ever need a little extra air in a tire or need to make basic repairs on a trip.

Did you know in Dane County, travel accounts for over 30% of the average person's total emissions. Choosing to walk, bike, bus, or carpool even for one trip, can make a difference. Start with one day, one errand or one commute – see what works for you!



Are you an owner or resident of a multi-family home? Join Sustain Dane, FOCUS ON ENERGY®, and the City of Madison for a free webinar to learn how to make energy-saving upgrades more affordable and practical.

You will learn how to combine incentives and resources from FOCUS ON ENERGY®, Federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding, Sustain Dane's Efficiency Navigator, and City of Madison. Together, these programs may provide up to $10,000 per unit for qualifying improvements.

Learn more and RSVP here

Accurate-Airtight Enclosures

Are you an experienced Energy Auditor looking for a company where you can build a long-term career? Accurate-Airtight is looking for a Residential Energy Auditor to join our growing team of professional energy auditors. Learn more and apply here.

We appreciate you being part of our Sustain Dane community. Make a difference in local sustainability—support Sustain Dane today.

Donate to Sustain Dane

In the Community

November 6: Sustain Dane Summit

October 4: Madison Drive$mart Meet & EV Display at Middleton Community Church

October 4: Harvest Fest with Rooted WI

October 7 & 8: 2026 Racial Justice Summit with the YWCA Madison

October 7: Lil' Explorer Pop Up Play Cafe with the Lussier Heritage Center

October 11: Sustainability Walk with UW Arboretum

October 13: All Around Dane County Middleton with Sustain Dane

October 14: Recycle Better Reunion with Sustain Dane

October 17: Garden Workday with the Dane County Humane Society

October 21: Dane County Multifamily Housing Energy Resource Webinar

October 28: Sustainability Symposium with UW-Madison

October 29: Full Moon & Halloween Luminary Hike with Lussier Family Heritage Center

Sustain Dane Forest & Tree Members and Partners.
Join the Sustain Dane Membership at the Forest, Tree, or Leaf level.

Support organizations that value sustainability:


HO-CHUNK GAMING
MADISON


mge
your community energy company


CITY OF MADISON
WISCONSIN


UWHealth


STARTINGBLOCK
MADISON'S STARTUP HUB


designCraft
advertising with a Conscience


KLEENMARK
Janitorial Services,
Supplies, & Equipment


REYNOLDS
Est. 1888
TRANSFER & STORAGE
INC.


DANE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
WASTE +
RENEWABLES


COMMUNITY
SHARES
OF WISCONSIN




ZING
COLLABORATIVE


focus on energy
Partnering with Wisconsin utilities



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