



Legal News

## Firms give environmental efforts the green light

May 5, 2008

The next time any of you Milwaukeeans are at the market, you might notice a fellow shopper sporting a re-useable canvas bag with Godfrey & Kahn S.C.'s logo.

The firm distributed the bags at its recent, firm-wide Earth Day celebration at its Milwaukee headquarters. The firm also brought in a prominent local speaker known for his expertise in going green, Ken Leinbach, executive director of the Milwaukee Urban Ecology Center.

Both the bags and the presentation were huge hits, says Arthur J. Harrington, a partner with the firm and chair of its

Environmental and Energy Law Practice Group. While Harrington would like to take credit for the grocery bag idea, he can't. A member of the support staff suggested it to the "Green Team" that he chairs, a group charged with leading the firm in its efforts to go green.

"It's creating a whole new esprit de corps, especially on the support staff side, in coming up with ideas and changing the mindset," says Harrington.

### Becoming Eco-Challenge Partners

Godfrey & Kahn is not the only law firm going green these days. Also on board are Michael Best & Friedrich LLP's Madison office, and the Madison firms of Garvey McNeil & McGillivray, and Cullen, Weston, Pines & Bach, as well as Green Bay's Liebmann, Conway, Olejniczak & Jerry S.C.

Like many businesses, these firms have been recycling paper and toner cartridges for years, and are consuming filtered water in glasses, or coffee in real mugs. These firms have taken their commitments to going green much further than that, however.

Godfrey & Kahn, Cullen, Weston, Pines & Bach, and the Madison office of Michael Best have all accepted the American Bar Association-Environmental Protection Agency's Law Office Climate Challenge. Per the American Bar Association's Web site, it's a program designed to encourage law offices to take specific steps to conserve energy and resources, as well as reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. The program, started in March 2007, outlines four ways that a firm may participate. Michael Best chose the best practices for office paper management, says Linda H. Bochert, a partner in the Land and Resources Practice Group. They've reduced their paper usage and have increased the recycled content in the paper they purchase. At least 90 percent of the paper the firm buys will be 30 percent post-consumer recycled content.

Meanwhile, at both Godfrey & Kahn and Cullen, Weston Pines & Bach, among their strategies for managing paper consumption is to increase electronic communication, and print double-sided documents. At Godfrey & Kahn, that meant re-setting the default mechanism on more than 140 printers and copiers.

### Other Green Ideas

Consider, for example:

- At Cullen, Weston, Pines & Bach, the firm became an Environmental Protection Agency Green



Power Partner recently, which is an effort to get companies to voluntarily step forward to reduce their carbon emissions. The program works in conjunction with Madison Gas & Electric, so that customers may pay a “green tariff,” and can determine what percentage of their energy they want to be attributable to green sources, such as wind.

Curt Pawlisch, a partner, says, “We went with 100 percent, and as far as we know, we’re the only law firm in Wisconsin to have signed up at any level like that.”

- Garvey, McNeil & McGillivray is also a Green Power partner. The firm has installed a programmable thermostat to keep the temperature at comfortable levels only during business hours. The firm is located in a converted warehouse building, which was renovated with green construction materials — plus, it is located downtown near the courthouses, which means cutting down on employees using their cars. But, perhaps two of the firm’s more creative green endeavors are that last year, it decided to substitute cash payments from a client/local farmer with Community Supported Agriculture, or CSA shares. Every week, the client delivered produce he had grown, which was split among the firm. Also, the firm purchases coffee from Just Coffee Coop, which is 100 percent fair trade and dedicated to the use of transparent and sustainable business practices. The coffee is delivered by bike year-round.

- At the Madison Office of Michael Best & Friedrich LLP, the firm has purchased a corporate membership with Community Car, which is a member-based car-sharing service that provides cars by the hour for individuals and organizations. The cars obtain high gas mileage or are hybrids. It’s an employee benefit for support staff and lawyers.

In addition, the firm has pitched the paper and styrofoam cups and plastic cutlery, replacing them with glassware, mugs, silverware and cornstarch-based disposable, compostable products, as well as switching to unbleached paper towels and napkins.

- At Liebmann Conway, when computer upgrades were recently needed, the firm switched out the desktops with laptops, which use one-third of the power. For those who wouldn’t part with their desktops, or had desktops that didn’t need replacing quite yet, they switched out the CRT monitors with flat-screen monitors that use one-third of the power.

The firm also switched to the Pro Law file management system, taking one step closer to becoming paperless. And, when renovating part of the office, they installed automatic light switches that turn off the lights when no one is in the room.

- Finally, at Godfrey & Kahn’s Madison branch, a number of staff and attorneys have agreed to participate in National Bike to Work Day on May 15. The firm is expanding that into a pilot program, so those who want to keep peddling to work will be given odometers for their bicycles to record their mileage. They’ll record their weekly totals and be given a yet-to-be-determined incentive.

**Why Go Green?** A common theme is simply, “It’s the right thing to do.” Beyond that, Harrington observes, “We’ve been advising clients quite a bit on sustainability issues recently, and we decided that if we’re going to be talking the talk, we better be walking the walk ourselves.” He adds that a number of firm clients have been taking an early lead on sustainability issues. The management committee decided to follow their lead.

Godfrey & Kahn and Cullen, Weston, Pines & Bach have posted information about their green initiatives on their Web sites; Garvey McNeil & McGillivray, Liebmann Conway and Michael Best have not — yet.

Bochert says that at Michael Best, their clients probably aren’t aware of the firm’s green program because it’s so new. “But, I would hope they would view them in a positive light,” he says. “Our clients are innovative and lead by example all the time in their fields. We strive to do the same.”

There was no push-back from climate change skeptics at the Cullen and Garvey firms.

These are relatively small firms, where like minds have come together, located in a community that is highly environmentally conscious.

At Liebmann Conway, located in Green Bay, which is a decidedly more conservative community, Jodi L. Arndt acknowledges that there are critics in her office. “I don’t lecture them,” she says. “I just go to

the management committee and show them how these practical suggestions, that also happen to be green, are going to save us money in the long run. You'd be surprised how well that works."

Likewise, at large law offices, Bochert and Harrington have their dissenters. They agree that education is the best tool to win them over, coupled with making the green choices easy and convenient for them. If they still aren't interested, they may opt out wherever possible.

For any law firm leaders considering going green, Bochert urges not to let the cost dictate the decision. Her firm has incurred minimal expenses; the recycled paper costs only slightly more than its traditional counterpart, and compostable disposable dishes can be purchased at Target. Pawlisch adds that the price of Green Power electricity is just a penny per kilowatt hour.

Bochert says, "'Green' can mean a whole range of things. A firm can spend a little or a lot. For us, we focused on green ideas that involve choices that are pretty easy to make, at a low- or no-cost investment."

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