

We're big on being green

By Dana Cook Grossman

The word “green” has lots of positive connotations. Commenting on the “green thumb” of someone who loves gardening, for example, is high praise indeed. Referring to “a green” in the presence of a devoted golfer is apt to evoke a vision of the perfect putt. And mentioning “greens” to a gastronome will most likely inspire ruminations on fresh arugula and baby spinach.

Of course the word “green” has special meaning at Dartmouth. “The Green” is the heart, physically and figuratively, of the Hanover campus. Green has been the color worn by Dartmouth athletes ever since the school's first intercollegiate contest (a baseball game) in 1866. And “the Big Green” is the sports-page moniker for Dartmouth's teams.

Then there's “being green.” A few decades ago, that term would have made most people think of Kermit the Frog crooning “It's not easy being green.” It's still not easy being green, but nowadays the term is associated not with a frog puppet but with real frogs. And with other fauna (including *Homo sapiens*), with flora (from the tiniest bacteria to the grandest Sequoias), and with our collective habitat, the planet Earth. Environmental consciousness, formerly the domain of a few *vores clamantium in deserto* (“voices crying in the wilderness,” to paraphrase the Dartmouth motto), has gone mainstream. There is now interest in nearly every quarter of society in sustainability, recycling, and renewable energy—especially since the April 20 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

But what does all this have to do with the medical enterprise that is the focus of this magazine? Quite a bit. Here are just a few examples:

In 2009, DHMC became the first medical center in the nation to calculate its carbon footprint. John Leigh, manager of waste and recycling, developed a tool to make the calculation and has since shared it with other hospitals. Having the calculator means that as environmental improvements are made, their effect can be accurately tracked (see dartmed.dartmouth.edu/su09/r04 for more on this effort).

A few weeks ago, Dartmouth-Hitchcock was named a member of the Environmental Leadership Circle, the most prestigious recognition from Practice Greenhealth, a national membership organization for health-care institutions that are devoted to environmentally responsible operations. (To

learn more about DHMC's environmental leadership, see dartmed.dartmouth.edu/su07/f01).

There's still more. The Prouty, the massive bike ride and walk that is a fund-raiser for Dartmouth's Norris Cotton Cancer Center, went overwhelmingly green last year. More than 4,500 bikers and walkers, plus thousands of volunteers, started and finished at the Hanover middle school—but left behind a mere 15 bags of trash. All the remaining waste (4,220 pounds of it) was either recycled or composted.

And Dartmouth Medical School, along with Dartmouth College and Dartmouth's other professional schools, has just launched a new sustainability initiative to dramatically increase its recycling rate. Currently, 11% of Dartmouth's paper, aluminum, glass, and plastic are recycled; the goal of the new program is to get to 40% by 2015.

WE at DARTMOUTH MEDICINE are big on being green, too. If you're reading the print edition of the magazine, the paper these words are printed on is from trees managed in compliance with the rigorous forest stewardship standards of the Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), one of two major forest certification plans. A sustainably managed forest absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and stores it, helping to mitigate climate change.

The ink on these pages is “green,” too (even when it's black or blue!). All the inks used by our printer—Lane Press in Burlington, Vt. (the Green Mountain State, incidentally)—are soy-based and nontoxic and contain no heavy metals.

In addition, we've used a paperless “soft-proofing” system for over five years, and a year ago we developed a paperless system to archive our background reporting and fact-checking materials.

Or you may be reading this in our online edition, which we launched almost 10 years ago to extend our reach without putting *any* ink on paper (though it does require some electricity to both generate and consume online content).

Sure, not *everything* green is good. No one wants to be green with envy or green around the gills. And Kermit started out decidedly iffy about his hue. But he ended up concluding of being green that “it's beautiful.” Dartmouth couldn't agree more. ■

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