



# Sustainable Hope

By Nicole Brace '07

Bob Van Heukelom can glance into the Phelps Hall dish room at any time during the dining hall's three daily meals to survey the parade of dirty plates, glasses, and utensils that arrive on its rubber conveyor belt, slowly traveling towards a scraping station, soapy water, various rinse cycles, the drying rack, and (finally) back into the hands of hungry students, who will fill them again with food.



Initiatives campuswide have reduced the college's environmental impact on measures ranging from the use of electricity, water and natural gas to the amount of paper run through printers each year. Some are easier to adapt than others. Going "trayless" in Phelps has been a major adjustment for students, but the results are significant and include conserving 60,000 gallons of water, 1,500 pounds of chemicals, detergent and rinse agents, and 532 hours of energy annually.

These days, what he can't see on that conveyor belt excites him the most. At the beginning of the school year, Hope College Dining Services went "trayless," and this simple innovation, in concert with a host of other college-wide conservation and stewardship initiatives, is strengthening Hope's ability to sustain itself, its environment, and the members of its community. Given the college's quiet history of conserving resources and trying to use them wisely, it's not so much that Hope is "going green" for the first time as it is "growing greener" than it has before.

Appropriately, such initiatives often serve well on multiple levels. In many cases, the steps that help reduce Hope's environmental footprint also reduce spending, in keeping with the college's ongoing effort to contain costs and make the best use of the support provided by alumni and friends of the college and the tuition paid by students and their families.

As for the trays, Van Heukelom, director of dining services, is quick to pose the obvious question: How does removing trays from a college dining hall make it a more sustainable place? The answer is partly numerical. The switch to trayless dining helps Hope save 60,000 gallons of water and 1,500 pounds of chemicals, detergent, and rinse agents per year; and the dish machine runs two and a half hours less per day, annually conserving 532 hours of energy.

Food waste is also declining. Without the possibility of filling an entire tray, students now

tend to finish all or most of one entrée, rather than sampling portions from a variety of plates and sending the leftovers to the dish line.

"Everyone's eyes are bigger than their stomachs, and trays didn't help that," he says. "I used to see a lot half-eaten meals, whole apples, and full glasses coming back on the belt. That's pretty minimal now."

Dining Service's initiatives extend beyond what happens in the servery itself. For years, Dining Services has donated leftover (not yet served) food to Western Theological Seminary's Community Kitchen, and has bought from local producers through Gordon Food Service. The department has long mulched uneaten food and student napkins to reduce their volume, but now also composts all food waste, kitchen trimmings, paper products, and waxed-paper containers through Zeeland-based Spurt Industries. The company's year-old Specialized

Organic Recycling Team converts food waste into commercial mulch, compost, and soil, and Dining Services will divert roughly 38 tons of waste from the local landfill by composting.

"It's a good solution," Van Heukelom says, "because it just makes sense."

Like the Hope mechanic who sharpens the college lawnmower blades twice a week or the electrician who steadily replaces dead T-12 light bulbs with more efficient T-8 models, Van Heukelom observes that these habits, while "sustainable," would happen even if they weren't labeled as such. "Though we didn't know it, we were already doing some things people now call 'sustainable.' We did them because they just seemed to make sense. Once we started to put words onto what we were doing, we started to be intentional about it. Now it's a purposeful thing, part of our stewardship of what we've been given."

A similar impulse to intentionally improve can be seen in the recent renovation of Kollen Hall. Built in 1956 and last remodeled in 1994, the building had been fitted with single-pane, aluminum frame windows that caused it to lose heat easily in winter and retain it unbearably in summer. In 2008, the college replaced the old windows with insulated "low emission" glass that filters strong sun and seals the building against deep cold. Hope also installed new, easier-to-maintain carpet, wall coverings, and hard-surface floors, lessening the burden on custodial staff, conserving worker resources, and saving maintenance hours.

"We're learning as we go to be smart with our renovations," says Greg Maybury, director of operations and Hope's newly-appointed chief sustainability officer.

And when new buildings must be built, the college is prepared to clear the space with an environmentally-conscious—if quirky—approach: house recycling. For over two decades, Hope has reused houses by literally lifting them from their foundations and driving them to new lots on the college's perimeter. Refurbished, these substantial homes support the surrounding neighborhoods and provide Hope with popular student housing. They also offer the college a less expensive alternative to new construction. Most recently, Hope moved the former Sixth Reformed Church parsonage from Lincoln Avenue to 14th Street, turning it into Mouw Cottage and naming it for the family of Rev. Henry Mouw '40, a former pastor of the church.

The efforts run campus-wide. New buildings like the Martha Miller Center and DeVos Fieldhouse—and newly renovated Lubbers and Graves halls—feature motion sensors that turn off lights when rooms are unused. The college is gradually replacing its mercury-vapor light fixtures with more efficient metal halide fixtures. Cottage and apartment thermostats top out at 72 degrees. Vegetable oil waste generated on campus will become biodiesel fuel for transportation. Grass clippings are composted locally. General lab and library printers print on both sides of the paper by default, and the college has moved paperwork from student time cards to budget reports to digital form to save paper as well. The list goes on.

Those with a ground-level view, however,

know that there is much yet to be done. Hope reduced its electric and water usage by 10 percent and 20 percent respectively during the last fiscal year, but it also hired GMB Architects to perform an energy audit on its three most energy-intensive buildings. Members of the faculty and administration have formed the Campus Sustainability Advisory Committee to study ways to streamline those structures' energy output, integrate sustainable measures into college infrastructure, and make environmental stewardship a key aspect of a Hope education. Students continue to advocate for a more sustainable Hope by implementing a campus-wide battery/print cartridge recycling program, instituting voluntary "no-drive Tuesdays," and facilitating the annual Earth Day/Earth Week celebrations.

Of the numerous reasons to care for one's place on earth, religion professor Steven Bouma-Prediger '79 submits to his students that the most compelling is to be found in the book of Genesis: "God put the human in the Garden of Eden to serve and protect it." As he considers Hope's future, Greg Maybury concurs. "Spiritually, we're called upon to be good stewards of all the resources we're entrusted with. We want to acknowledge that we've done the best with what we've been given, that we haven't wasted it."

*Editor's Note: With this issue featuring a story on sustainability efforts and care for the environment, it seemed only fitting for the publication itself to work toward the same goal. As noted on page three, News from Hope College is now printed on paper that includes recycled content and—as was true before—using environmentally friendly soy-based inks.*



Composting at the Kletz snack bar and the dining halls helps divert some 38 tons of waste from landfills. Above, junior Jason Storm of Wyoming, Mich., and Kletz staffer Shelly Nykamp collect a mix that includes biodegradable cups made from corn stalks.

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 — Bob Van Heukelom, director of dining services



On a warm September day they're open, but come winter the new energy-efficient windows installed in Kollen Hall last summer not only make residents more comfortable than the 1950s-era originals but also reduce the resources needed to heat the building. Here, sophomore Erin Behrendt of Howell, Mich., enjoys a quiet moment.

