

Sparrow Health System's recycling efforts garner national recognition

Sparrow Health System, a multi-hospital network in Lansing, MI, has consistently been recognized over the years for doing practically everything right – from waste minimization to mercury elimination.

In 2006, Sparrow earned the Sustained Environmental Leadership Award from Hospitals for Healthy Environment (H2E), the fifth consecutive year Sparrow has been recognized by H2E. The award is presented annually to health systems nationwide in recognition of outstanding environmental performance. Award recipients are distinguished by their pioneering efforts to reduce the environmental impact of the healthcare industry by implementing innovative programs that set industry standards for waste reduction and pollution prevention.

In 2005, Sparrow undertook an ambitious recycling effort that has become a model for other healthcare systems. The following is adapted with permission from the Greater Lansing Business Monthly from an [article](#) it published in August 2006 written by Reza Tavakoli, Sparrow's director of environmental services.

Sparrow Health System stands at the forefront of a growing national trend toward creating healthcare systems that recognize the fundamental link between healthy people and a healthy environment.

We believe that protecting our environment while providing quality patient care is critical to our community's long-term health. Associates from all departments have helped Sparrow become a national leader in environmentally responsible healthcare.

Another benefit of this ongoing environmental process improvement program is that, while we are helping to develop a healthier community and hospital environment, we also are realizing meaningful financial savings associated with recycling, reuse and waste reduction.

Being recognized by Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E) for the fifth consecutive year clearly reflects our dedication to pollution prevention.

Recycling recap

Following is a snapshot of the waste reduction/recycling activities in 2005 that helped Sparrow earn national recognition for its pollution prevention efforts.

In 2005, Sparrow began requiring contractors to recycle demolition waste, diverting 442 tons from the landfill and saving the hospital more than \$22,000. In 2005, Sparrow also recycled:

- 360,000 pounds of paper and cardboard;
- 5,003 pounds of single-use devices, eliminating them from the solid waste stream and saving the hospital more than \$3,900 in regulated medical waste costs;

- more than 84,481 pounds of computers, monitors and other electronic equipment, at the same time requiring the vendor to recover all raw materials per EPA guidelines and provide the hospital with a Certificate of Recycling as well as a Certificate of Data Elimination for each pick up;
- 12,900 pounds of cooking oil from Sparrow kitchens; and
- 58 tons of pallets.

In 2005, Sparrow donated (and thus removed from the solid waste stream):

- more than 85 pieces of furniture (beds, chairs, office furniture) to two neighboring county hospitals, and another 42 pieces of furniture to other local not-for-profit organizations;
- 132 mattresses to the local mission;
- medical equipment to Michigan State University, American Red Cross and other not-for-profit organizations;
- a 40-foot semi-trailer of medical supplies, medical equipment, beds, furniture and computers for the Lansing Regional Sister Cities Commission, with a final destination of Ghana, Africa;
- a total of 155 computer systems to other not-for-profit organizations; and
- 5,810 pounds of prepared food to Food Movers.

We are proud to be a national leader in the trend toward environmentally responsible healthcare. Sparrow is deeply committed to its ongoing environmental process improvement program, making our community a better place to live and creating a safer and healthier hospital environment for our patients, visitors, staff, physicians and volunteers.

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