

Newsletter



WELCOME!

THANK YOU FOR SIGNING UP FOR THE BSC CONNECT: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIONS' QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER! WE HAVE SEVERAL EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENTS INSIDE, AS WELL AS SOME GREAT WAYS FOR YOU TO GET INVOLVED!

Before we jump into this issue, I want to take a moment to highlight a few things:

First, September is National Hunger Awareness Month. As an organization that aims to make a more equitable future for all, we want to encourage our readers to think about food security not just in regard to environmental sustainability, but also as a community issue. The reality is that in South Dakota, 72,900 people are facing hunger ([Feeding America](#)). That's nearly 73,000 people who are unable to access adequate nutrition essential for mental and physical development. One in nine children face hunger issues that can lead to chronic health problems and keep them from receiving an education. For this Hunger Awareness Month, take action to support members of our community facing food insecurity. If your garden has an excess crop of fresh produce, seek out an organization that can help place those herbs, melons, and vegetables into the homes of families in need. Organize a donation drive at your workplace for high-fiber, low sugar, low sodium food items to increase your impact! Additionally, we encourage you to write to your representatives in support of food assistance programs and school lunch programs to help reduce hunger in our community.

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Volunteers Needed



Second, we are excited to announce that we have room on our Board for two new members! Our organization is growing, our impact in the community is increasing, and we are looking for motivated people who want to help us maximize our impact. In addition to helping steer the organization forward, you will be behind the programming for Green Drinks and our newsletter! If you are interested in serving on our Board of Directors, send a letter of interest and a Resume/CV to amber@buildingsustainable.org.

We also are looking for volunteers to help identify potential Green businesses, locations for Green Drinks, contributors to future newsletters, and to perform Social Media Takeovers showing how you or your organization employs sustainable actions in your daily routines. Building Sustainable Connections is run 100% by volunteers, and we are so excited to welcome new volunteers into our organization!

BOARD MEMBERS

- Monthly Committee Meetings (Jan - Oct)
- Raise awareness for Building Sustainable Connections
- Contact local businesses and advocate for Green Business Program membership
- Assist with programming (tabling events, green drinks, etc.)
- Help to direct focus of BSC outreach

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Meet as needed
- Help to communicate sustainable actions and programs
- Schedule and coordinate networking and social events throughout the year
- Promote sustainable personal and business actions
- Identify potential contributors to the quarterly newsletter

Contests & Committees

SPEAKING OF GREEN DRINKS...

In April, we asked you to contribute a design for consideration in the rebranding of our Green Drinks logo. Four designs were submitted, and we asked for your help in identifying the most popular design. On 1 August, we closed the voting and your winning design is...



From the creator:

“This minimalist design is intended to evoke the simple yet complex nature of how we all need to work together to get things done. It isn’t done through one conversation with one person, but rather a complex group of diverse people all coming together in the same room to talk about the different angles from which we can collaborate with one another. I really wanted to incorporate the flag of Sioux Falls in a way that was subtle, yet emphasized the importance of branding Green Drinks’ Sioux Falls chapter.”

UPDATE: SUSTAINABLE IMPROVEMENTS GRANT

Thank you to everyone who helped us spread the word about our [Sustainable Improvements Grant](#)! The application period closed 31 August at midnight, and our Grants Committee is actively reviewing the submissions. Recipients for the 2023 funding period will be notified on 1 October.

We hope to continue this grant for years to come, opening applications in April of 2024 for a second round of funding opportunities! If you or your organization is interested in [donating](#) to this grant program, send us a check with the note: “2024 Grant Program Funds.”



Newly Certified Organizations



JOHNSON
ENVIRONMENTAL

Johnson Environmental works to provide education to builders and renters alike on the value of installation of energy-efficient systems. They create affordable, sustainable housing options long-term. The company uses the newest technology and computer modeling to help design buildings that provide clients with a safe and assured quality of life. This is done through the testing and verification process during construction to ensure that superior quality is taking place. Johnson Environmental places a particular priority on holding rental properties to high energy-efficient standards.

From appliances to construction considerations, Johnson Environmental examines all aspects of the construction process to ensure they embody the company's values of carbon footprint reduction, developer and investor support, tax credit promotion, and sustainable building practices. They believe in helping people to live better while providing energy-saving techniques and methods that reduce tenant energy costs; creating a more comfortable, satisfied long-term tenant with minimal energy loss and negative environmental impact.

Additionally, the company's manager, Chris Johnson, is heavily involved with the local Habitat for Humanity organization, performing green building certification inspections at no cost to the organization. Johnson conducts training throughout the state to help builders better understand new building codes and work toward green building certifications. These certifications include RESNET, Energy STAR, Net Zero Ready, and more.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO
JOHNSON ENVIRONMENTAL!**



Newly Certified Organizations



Augustana University hosts more than 2,100 undergraduate and graduate students studying in more than 100 different majors, minors, and pre-professional programs. Among these is the newly created interdisciplinary undergraduate program, Environmental Studies (introduced to the University in 2020). As of 2023, the Augustana Environmental Studies major hosts roughly 35 students who, upon entering their senior year of study, are tasked with creating a student-led project. Many of these students have created projects that also assist the University in its sustainability goals. These include, amongst other projects, the creation of a native prairie garden, a campus garden and on-site garden compost center, and the utilization of campus green space to create an apple orchard, wood duck habitat, outdoor classroom, greenhouse, and apiary. Not only do these projects create a lasting legacy on campus for outgoing students, many of the projects have become a source of pride and stewardship for Augustana's current students. For example, the campus garden and greenhouse are tended to by members of the on-campus student group, Augie Green, throughout each academic year.

In addition to the student-led projects, Augustana's facilities are constantly being upgraded to promote energy efficiency. Dormitories and classrooms alike receive updates to windows, plumbing, lighting, and HVAC equipment as replacements are needed. This phased improvement plan allows Augustana University to implement changes, such as occupancy sensors and low-flow faucets, at a financially sustainable rate.

Faculty at the University believe that exposure to sustainable practices in an academic setting is an important aspect of the college experience as college life can help pave the way for students to live more sustainably in their futures.

For up-to-date information on Sustainability at Augustana University, additional resources have been created by the Environmental Studies Department Advisor, Dr. David O'Hara and can be accessed at the following links:

[Augustana Campus Sustainability](#)

[Augustana Environmental Studies Program Overview](#)

CONGRATULATIONS TO AUGUSTANA UNIVERSITY!



Perspective: Combating Food Waste



This feature was written by Kristin Johnson, owner of Fair Market grocery.

When I met Jim, I didn't expect that we would have much more in common than a purchaser/buyer connection. But as our passion for food in the industry where we both find ourselves became apparent and the stories we told each other about how we even ended up there were shared, I realized my own genesis story and current soapbox may be more common. It all seems increasingly relevant in a world straining to do better and yet still dying under the weight of its purchasing habits.

I, like Jim, grew up in a house full of people and it taught us both how to be scrappy and resourceful. Oldest of 10 children, my parents had to be extremely creative with how they made it all work. As far as food was concerned, if we didn't grow it or process it ourselves, we didn't eat it. Grocery shopping was extremely infrequent and when it did happen, there were multiple trips through a checkout with coupons or the "limit" of certain items. Cottage cheese and yogurt were luxuries that we got only when on deep discount. Bread from the day-old store was the norm. You get the picture. But the beauty from ashes is that I learned more about cooking, food sourcing, food preservation, and food cultivation than I even have the energy to constructively deal with as an adult. I'm going to need a few lifetimes to use it all.

My passion for food waste/rescue is where I intersect with you as you read this. We all know the elevator stat: "we waste 1/3 of our food". It's difficult though to make a vague number like that have any real effect on the people who preach it or hear it. Does that mean the partial container of slimy spring mix that I threw out last night because I overbought last week—because it was a good deal—make me the bad guy?

While the unfortunate place we find ourselves right now is partly due to "the death of a thousand cuts"--like discarding dry bread--there are also much larger movements going on behind the scenes of day-to-day purchasing that have helped us sink at the rate of the Titanic. And so, our multitudinous small indiscretions alongside fewer in number but larger in scope national habits have us left with a gigantic carbon footprint and many people with food insecurity, no respite in sight. Food waste emissions alone are nearly equivalent to the



emissions of transportation. While it is hard to truly know how much is wasted, the real take-home is that any advances in this sector could have profound impacts on greenhouse gas totals and could be huge in providing food to the 1.3 billion people who find themselves food-insecure today.

I believe the single biggest factor in the US today is the bogus dating that marketing has led us to believe indicates when something should be thrown out. We threw out. There has been plethora of literature produced by the federal government regarding food safety, dating, and labeling. The condensed story: the only food that has an true expiration date is infant formula and the rest you should use your nose and brain to determine consumability.

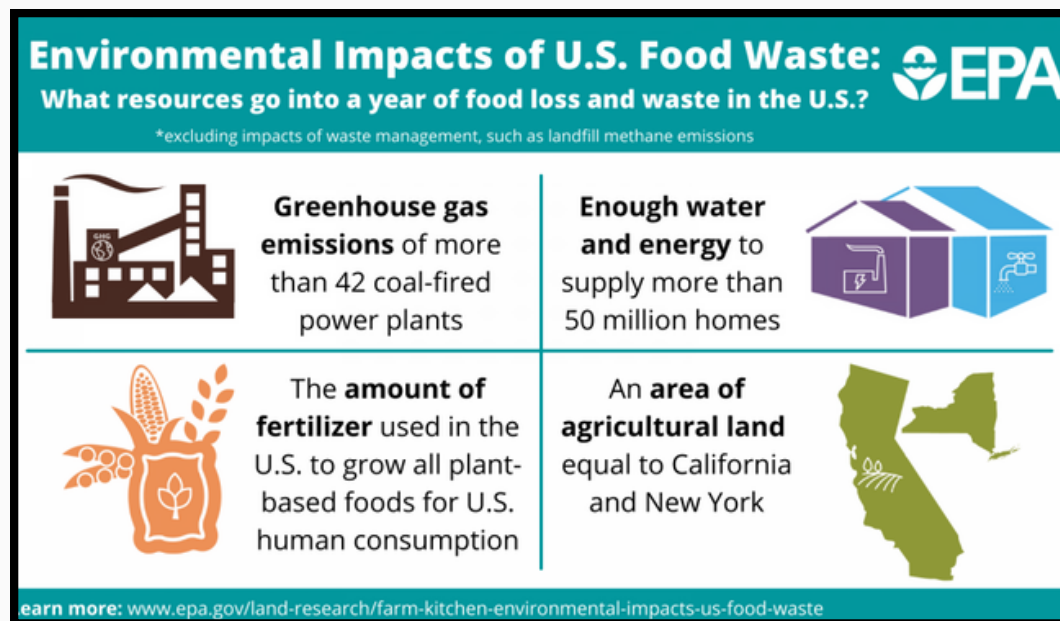
I'm including a link for self-education and, I hope, for future food choices and potential soap boxing because more than ever we need to educate to create freedom of choice and to address the desperate climate situation we're facing.

[Food Product Dating - USDA Food Safety & Inspection Service](#)

[Shelf Stable Food Safety - USDA Food Safety & Inspection Service](#)

Many of the other reasons food gets wasted are truly beyond our control and won't change unless we have some legislative intervention like France with their 2016 putting up some boundaries for supermarkets around throwing food away, encouraging them to donate it instead. So much of the waste happens before the food ever makes it to the shelf or even your home. Remember when everything was chipotle flavored? How about those red, white, and blue Rice Krispies? Or the never-ending new flavors of KitKats? All the inflation that we did see over

the last few years on the shelf tags at the store covered up the inflation hidden in the actual quantity we are purchasing. 20 Ziploc bags covertly changed to 19 bags. 11 oz of cereal? Now, it's 10.9. These real examples from the food we process at Fair Market. Then, add in all the rebranding, brand buyouts, packing changes, and true accidents ranging from rolled semis to someone's first day running a forklift and smashing the corner of a pallet full of food. These all create inordinate amounts of orphaned food that have little use in the traditional US grocery sector.



Perspective: Combating Food Waste (continued)

WHAT TO DO?

Start to experiment with consuming product that you may have thrown out in the past. Use the bit of old milk in a coffee cake instead of buttermilk. Cut the rotten bits out of a peach and make some jam. (There are literally 9 peaches in this stage staring at me while I'm writing this. Yes, they were a good deal. And I fell for it.) Get yourself a few backyard chickens and throw the bits to them or find a friend who has farm animals and turn that waste into food! Composting is an accessible backyard option as well. You have non-traditional grocery buying options as well: buying the "uglies" or close-dated food at traditional retailers to shopping at non-traditional establishments that buy up/gather all of the "unwanted" and sell at a discount. If you have connections, encourage management to find creative ways to rehome products. I have an incredible number of photos of dumpsters in Sioux Falls sent to me from people around the city. Excessive food waste is happening 100 ft from where you checked out at the grocery store today. Also, there's an app, Olio. It's a location-based way to give away food and non-food items to others who are also in the apps database. A really great way to get items out of your refrigerator before leaving town and get them in the hands of someone who can use them.

IS THIS STILL GOOD TO EAT?

THREE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT FOOD DATE LABELING

There are a variety of phrases used on food date labels in the U.S. to describe quality dates such as "Best if Used By/Before", "Sell-By", "Use-By", and "Freeze-By".

This can be confusing and may result in discarding perfectly wholesome food, which is costly to consumers and harms the environment.



So here are three things you need to know about date labeling to avoid throwing away food that is still safe to consume:

- #1** Except for infant formula, food date labels are not indicators of food safety and are not required by Federal law. Manufacturers provide dating to help consumers and retailers decide when food is of peak quality.
- #2** Becoming more commonly used is the USDA-recommended "Best if Used By" label to signal when the product is at its best flavor or quality.
- #3** If the food date label passes during home storage, the food product (except for infant formula) should still be safe and wholesome if handled properly until the time spoilage is evident. Spoiled foods will develop an off-odor, flavor, or texture due to naturally occurring spoilage bacteria. If a food has developed such spoilage characteristics, it should not be eaten.

While there isn't really a way to get to zero, we can turn things around. In a less densely populated state like South Dakota, turning the ship around can be somewhat easier. Couple that with our Midwest ethics of not wanting to waste, ability to roll up our sleeves and do hard work, and willingness to help others... we have endless opportunity to show other states and cities how to turn their own ship around.

**BUILDING SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIONS IS EXCITED
TO INTRODUCE OUR NEWEST OPPORTUNITY TO
RECOGNIZE ORGANIZATIONS IN THEIR SUSTAINABLE
JOURNEY.**



Organizations qualifying as a Sustainable Colleague are committed to sustainable improvements in their business practices and are working with our organization to identify additional opportunities to implement a triple bottom line business model. These organizations may be solo ventures, home-based operations, or organizations that are new to the community and working to maximize their positive environmental, social, and economic impact.

Organizations who participate in this program will be listed in our Green Business Directory under the heading of "Sustainable Colleagues." This listing will highlight the organization's current and planned sustainability efforts. Like our Green Business Directory members, Sustainable Colleagues will be listed in our directory for a period of 3 years. They will also receive a one-on-one consultation and sustainability progress plan to help these organizations ultimately reach for our Bronze Level Certification or higher!

Send us a message to learn more!



**Introducing: Sustainable Colleague
Award**

Perspective: Understanding Sustainable Human Resources



This feature was written by Terry D. Lively, CDS, CSS, SHRM-SCP

With Environmental, Social, & Governance (E.S. & G) being a strong focus of many businesses and industries, it has worked its way into the boardroom and accountability processes. At first glance, this may seem like a great thing for most companies. It is easy for a Board of Directors or supporting entities to want to encourage these policies and programs. But it may be harder for the business itself to meet these requirements. A key factor in any business, big or small, is having the right people in the right positions to be able to make things work or happen the way they should.

This is where Sustainable Human Resources (HR) comes in. Whether you are a company of two or two thousand employees, being able to select and position the right employees into positions that will make the company successful is vital.

There are several areas where HR comes into play. From working with all areas of the company hierarchy to the connections in the community and talent pool you need to draw from:

- **Company hierarchy:** this can be a Board of Directors, Top Management or front-line supervisors and employees. HR needs to have a thorough understanding of first, what the outcome needs are, second, what capital and physical expenditures are allowed to make this result and third, what is the timeline to accomplish these outcomes.
- **Community:** When looking at E.S. & G. goals, does the community understand and support the goals that the company is pursuing? This is an area where HR may need to do some explaining, especially when the company is looking at specific sustainable environmental policies. If a company is looking for product exchange, i.e., fluorescent lights, and the community does not offer an exchange or recycle option then the company cannot meet this goal. This is why having HR involved at the top level and at the community level is so important. Knowing what the community is able to offer and then working with community leaders to develop other areas that may help the company meet its goals is another key role of HR.



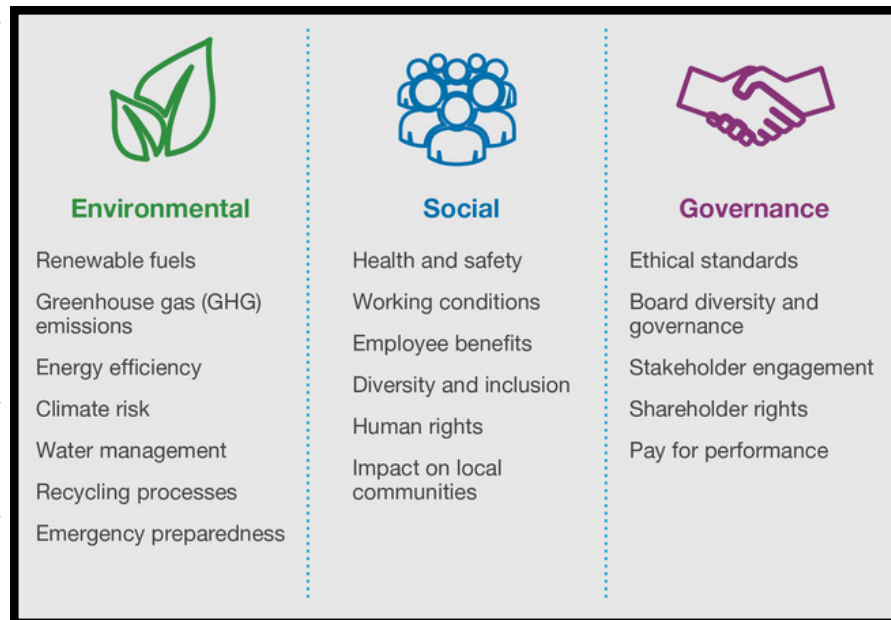
- **Talent pool:** This is arguably the most critical areas that HR has a direct impact on. Having an HR professional familiar with the company's goals gives the HR team a directive on where to focus their recruiting and retention efforts. Knowing what the local area has to offer in the way of hard and soft skills helps HR know if they need to expand the area of concentration. This also helps the recruiting team know how to develop the position notices using key terminology to attract the right internal and external candidates. Without knowing what the key objectives of the company are the HR team would spend extra time sorting through applicants only to find out that the search criteria were missed.

So, you may ask: what is the difference between Sustainable HR and regular HR functions?

Sustainable HR has similar roles as a regular HR except Sustainable HR is also what will help drive your E.S.& G. programs by developing long term goals and finding the right champions within and outside your organization to meet those goals.

Your HR professional will know the skill sets of your current employees and those you are recruiting and plan what upskilling your company will need to focus on. They do this by understanding the processes and procedures needing to be developed or refined within your organization. They know your organization's ethnic and cultural diversity. They can lead teams to help develop your Environmental programs and promotions. They are the central clearinghouse for results and development of your employees. This will attract new qualified employees seeking environmentally conscious company's and also help with retention of current employees. Most importantly your Sustainable HR professional or team can

communicate progress through real-world developments to the management hierarchy and to those outside your company. This will help paint a better picture of your company to investors, lending institutions and even to insurance companies thus positively affecting your bottom line.



We greatly appreciate your support for Building Sustainable Connections and are now offering donor incentives for your tax deductible contributions.

Level 1

Donations of \$25-250
3" sticker



Level 2

Donations of \$251 - 500
3" sticker
20 oz bike bottle



Level 3

Donations of \$501 - 1,000
3" sticker
20 oz bike bottle
Cutlery set



Level 4

Donations > \$1,000
3" sticker
20 oz bike bottle
Cutlery set
Rocketbook Flip
Delivered in a keepsake
gifting box



Donor Incentives