

# Newsletter



## IN THIS ISSUE

# WELCOME!

THANK YOU FOR SIGNING UP FOR THE BSC CONNECT: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIONS' NEWSLETTER!

As always, we thank you all for your continued support!

You'll notice a few things have changed in our newsletter this time. First, we're introducing you to our new **Board President, Eric Smith!** Eric is not new to BSC, but given his new position as Board President, we felt it was time for an introduction!

Also, you may have noticed that we removed "quarterly" from our newsletter frequency. We have had an excellent year with FOUR new member organizations enrolling in our **Green Business Directory!!!** This has kept us very busy, so we can't wait to tell you more about each of these new organizations in the pages that follow.

Finally, as this is the end of October, we hope that you will keep Building Sustainable Connections in your giving plans for this year's Giving Tuesday. We have big goals for next year: increasing our micro-grant award amount for the Sustainable Improvement Grants, bringing you more Green Drinks, plus we have some exciting new programming for 2025, and more! Whether you can donate \$10 or \$1,000, **your donations help us tremendously.**

Check out our final page for **donor giving incentives** as well.

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# Founder's Corner



It's so surreal to sit back and realize that Building Sustainable Connections is only almost 3 years old! When I first sat at a local coffee shop in Downtown Sioux Falls dreaming up what BSC could look like and what it could do for the Sioux Falls community, I had big dreams and ambitions. Dreams and ambitions I am beyond excited to reflect that we have accomplished and are well on our way to exceeding in the near future!

Ultimately, I hoped to create a community of businesses and individuals who were also passionate about creating and uplifting sustainable actions in our region.

Today, there are eight certified Green Businesses in our Directory, we have reinvigorated the local Green Drinks chapter for Sioux Falls, and we have now officially seen the first completed project supported by our Sustainable Improvements Grant!

As an organization, BSC has so much to be proud of, and we cannot thank the community of Sioux Falls enough for embracing our vision and pushing us to the next level! As the founder of this incredible organization, I have always seen my role to be the person that brings BSC to life and searches for the right team to lead it to new heights. Sioux Falls has no shortage of incredible people who want to make a positive impact on its future. I have been fortunate to serve alongside many of them these past three years, and I am honored each day by the vision the Building Sustainable Connections Board of Directors has for its future. With that said, earlier this year, the circumstances seemed perfect for me to step back from my Executive Director role and transition to one that is more advisory in nature.

As difficult as it is to step back, I am so excited to see more voices help to shape BSC as it continues to expand! I am absolutely certain that BSC is in incredible hands. We will be introducing our Board members more throughout upcoming Newsletter editions, and I am confident you will agree that their vision for a more equitable, green, and prosperous Sioux Falls will only help continue to maximize our local impact.

To the community that has supported me and helped BSC get to the independent, future-focused organization it is today: you have my sincere and eternal gratitude.



**Photo Credit:**  
**Everett Palmer (2023)**



# Meet the BSC Board:

## Eric Smith, Board President

As President of our business-centered sustainability organization, Eric is responsible for leading strategic initiatives and fostering the integration of sustainable practices into corporate strategies. Through cultivating partnerships, the role involves driving environmentally conscious decision-making, assessment and certification of local corporate responsibility programs, and ensuring alignment with both economic and ecological goals. As President, Eric's goal is to play a pivotal role in shaping the Sioux Falls member organization vision, promoting eco-friendly innovation, and advocating for sustainable business practices at the forefront of the industry.



Eric and his family moved to Sioux Falls in 2014 where they plan to stay for years to come. The legacy of how businesses adopt sustainable practices and the changes each member organization makes for the betterment of Sioux Falls and



the quality of life for his wife and five children, guide Eric's vision for BSC and its continued success and impact. Eric joined BSC as its first business member organization obtaining Silver Certification for Americold, where he worked for 7 years. After obtaining certification, Eric joined the board bringing a corporate business mindset to help shape the goals, communication, and certification process. Eric has recently moved to Diamond Mowers as the Director of Supply Chain.

## Welcome, Eric!

# Sustainable Improvements Grant



At Building Sustainable Connections, we work tirelessly to prove that every step your organization makes toward a cleaner, greener, and just community is meaningful.

One way we work to promote sustainable changes within our community is through our Sustainable Improvements Grant. Started in 2022 with thanks to a grant from the Midco Foundation, Building Sustainable Connections launched a microgrant program in April of 2023 that offered up to \$300 to qualified businesses. Through our online application process, applicants were able to tell our Grants Committee how \$300 could help them achieve their sustainability goals.



Among our awardees for 2023 was the Sanford Research Green Committee. In her application, Dr. Kara McCormick noted that the Green Committee was in its early days at Sanford Research Center, and among its top priorities was the promotion of sustainable common spaces. The committee unearthed hydroponic growing towers from storage and utilized the Sustainable Improvement Grant as an opportunity to rebuild the system and begin growing healthy, edible greens for the north Sioux Falls campus.

From McCormick:

"Thanks to the sustainability grant, we've successfully installed three grow towers in our employee breakroom. We're currently cultivating a variety of herbs and lettuces, which our employees can harvest and even have a say in what's grown. This initiative is fostering a more sustainable food ecosystem within our workplace, contributing to both employee well-being and environmental responsibility. The grant funds covered the grow kits, baskets, mineral blend, and tools needed to bring this project to life."



Could your organization use a financial boost to achieve its sustainability goals? Stay tuned to BSC for the **2025 application period this coming April!**



***Building Sustainable Connections is excited to introduce a new opportunity to recognize organizations in their sustainable journey!***



**WHAT IS THE SUSTAINABLE COLLEAGUE AWARD:**

- Recognition program for businesses that are just starting their sustainable journey
- A new way for smaller organizations to receive recognition for their commitment to be "green"



**WHAT TYPES OF BUSINESSES QUALIFY:**

- Solo ventures
- Home-based operations
- Organizations that are new to the community and working to maximize their positive environmental, social, and economic impact.

Organizations qualifying as a Sustainable Colleague are committed to sustainable improvements in their business practices and are working with BSC to identify additional opportunities to implement a triple bottom line business model. 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!**

# Sustainable Colleague Award

# Newly Certified Organizations



# CNH

# RAVEN

Founded in 1956, Raven has been an integral member of the Sioux Falls community for nearly seven decades. Together with CNH, a global leader in ag and construction equipment, Raven is deeply committed to sustainable practices and environmental responsibility around the globe.

Raven's downtown headquarters building is LEED® Gold certified and stands as a testament to its commitment to sustainable building practices. The facility features low-flow lavatories that have effectively reduced water waste by an impressive 41%. The facility's "green" roof composed of living plants goes beyond aesthetics by providing water filtration, improving heat efficiency, and collecting rainwater for landscape irrigation. Sustainability is also integrated into daily onsite operations, from recycling systems to reusing materials, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to environmental responsibility.

Raven's dedication to sustainability also extends to its product lines. Precision agriculture products have been enabling farmers to be good stewards of the land since Raven began developing precision agriculture products in the 1970s. As a member of Operation Weed Eradication, Raven also contributes to sustainable practices for farmers, supporting efforts to remove weeds from their farms in an environmentally friendly manner.

Raven and CNH's commitment to environmental responsibility goes beyond business operations, engaging employees in community-driven initiatives. The Sioux Falls site has a dedicated Sustainability Committee that leads various initiatives to promote sustainable practices, and in 2023, employee-organized river cleanup events resulted in the removal of over 500 pounds of trash from the Big Sioux River. These collective actions reflect Raven and CNH's dedication to fostering a sense of shared values, engaging employees in the pursuit of a more sustainable future for Sioux Falls and beyond.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO RAVEN INDUSTRIES!





# Newly Certified Organizations



Founded on the core values of conservation and camaraderie through exploring the great outdoors, Dakota Adventure Supply works to create high quality, locally made outdoor gear. From the beginning of their operations, co-founders Jeff Hayward and Paxton Alsgaard sought to create outdoor gear that would withstand the test of whatever adventures lie ahead. Inspired by their Eagle Scout achievements, Jeff and Paxton launched their patch and repair program for their signature "Adventure Tote" where totes that had been weathered or torn could be sent back to their production facility for repair. As production increased, Dakota Adventure Supply worked with their South Dakota-based manufacturing company to create high-quality products out of waste canvas and mesh products sourced from the company's production line. These include their accessory pouch and axe head sheath. Dakota Adventure Supply works locally with a manufacturing company close to their Sioux Falls office at Start Up Sioux Falls in an effort to decrease the offsets associated with shipping and distribution. They also offer local pickup at their convenient downtown location for Startup Sioux Falls members, and only use carbon conscious ground shipping options with electronic invoices and packing slips to avoid paper waste. Additionally, Dakota Adventure Supply utilizes a co-working space with shared printers, Energy Star appliances, and occupancy sensors to reduce energy loss.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO  
DAKOTA ADVENTURE  
SUPPLY!**



# Newly Certified Organizations



Millennium Recycling is one of the country's most efficient material recovery facilities (MRFs); continually adapting and researching ways to stay ahead of the single stream recycling process. Serving communities across the Upper Midwest, Millennium uses state-of-the-art optical sorters, screens, magnets, and other sorting mechanisms to separate recyclable items. This process helps to make recycling more accessible and easier for consumers, and it also diverts a significant amount of waste from landfills.

Founded in 1999, Millennium Recycling has grown with intention: continually finding innovative ways to not only give a second life to items in their recycling facility, but also to improve the lives of the local community. One way they accomplish this is through participating in second chance employment. This gives members of the local community a fresh start to rebuild lives after incarceration. Millennium also partners with local nonprofits to contribute to community welfare and waste diversion efforts. This includes Millennium Recycling's nonprofit division, BINfluencers, which collaborates with area organizations to provide education and opportunities for waste diversion in the communities they serve.

Millennium's commitment to waste diversion does not end with the impressive actions of their facility. In addition to the thousands of tons of recyclables their facility processes each month, they also participate in local pallet recycling programs. This helps to create a more sustainable wood recycling program as pallets are mulched to landscaping materials at their end-of-life cycle.

At their Sioux Falls facility, Millennium has made providing meals for its employees a daily priority. This not only creates a great benefit of employment, but helps to reduce carbon emissions associated with mealtime travel. While the nature of the facility's operations requires a great deal of paved surfaces, Millennium has included pollinator pots and native landscaping near employee and visitor entrances.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO MILLENNIUM RECYCLING!



# Newly Certified Organizations



Direct Digital Control (DDC) has been automating commercial buildings since 1994. They see automation systems as the next frontier for commercial buildings since they improve energy efficiency by an average of 29%. To create a digital control system, DDC works with customers to identify their needs so they can determine the appropriate sensors and controllers to automate the space. With a range of solutions in their portfolio, DDC can control temperature, moisture, carbon dioxide, VOCs, and more to create a smarter, automated building. Once a control system is installed, DDC can program that site to reduce energy usage at the push of a button. Automating the control of energy not only decreases the businesses costs, but also puts less strain on the utility grid.

DDC is continually looking for additional methods to improve energy efficiency for their customers while maintaining comfort and good air quality. With a mission to improve commercial building efficiencies, DDC is helping customers get the most out of their facilities.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO  
DIRECT DIGITAL CONTROL!**



# BSC Team In Action!



This Earth Day, Building Sustainable Connections partnered with new SILVER Certified Green Business, Raven Industries, to host a cleanup site at Sertoma Park. Make sure you're signed up for our email list to learn about more opportunities to get involved with community engagement activities in Sioux Falls!

EARTH DAY

In June, board members Sienna Mayer and Chelsea Steinborn helped serve breakfast at the Banquet in downtown Sioux Falls - providing almost 200 people from the community a hot breakfast. The Banquet serves two meals every day, using reusable dishes, cups, and trays.

The Banquet's mission is to welcome the community to gather and serve each other, feeding body and spirit. In 2020, the Banquet served over 200,000 meals, with at least 12% of them being served to children under 12.

The Banquet makes it easy to bring your team to volunteer to prep and/or serve breakfast or dinner. Check out their website (<https://thebanquetsf.org/>) to sign-up.



GIVING BACK



On October 3rd, Board Members Eric Smith, Kasey Abbott, and Brandi Drumm represented BSC at the Great Outdoor Store's Sustainability Night event.

Building Sustainable Connections participated in the Great Outdoor Store's Sustainability Night alongside Friends of the Big Sioux River. BSC hosted a table to help spread the word about all that we, the Great Outdoor Store, and outdoor brand Patagonia are doing to promote sustainability.

COMMUNITY



# BSC Committees



Building Sustainable Connections is growing our impact, and we need your help! Volunteer with one of our committees:

**EVENTS**

**NEWSLETTER**

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

**GRANTS**

## YOUR INPUT:

- HELPS COMMUNICATE SUSTAINABLE ACTIONS & PROGRAMS
- ASSISTS IN PLANNING AND COORDINATING NETWORKING AND SOCIAL EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR
- IDENTIFIES POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTORS AND PERSPECTIVES TO OUR NEWSLETTER

**Contact Us for More Information!**



# The Importance of Climate Hope



## Photos and Perspective by Amber M. Lively

Like many of you reading this newsletter, I am engaged in many activities focused on creating lasting, sustainable change. I subscribe to local, regional, and national newsletters for inspiration, I work directly in the sustainability field, I serve on boards for climate and environmentally-focused organizations, and I am constantly looking for the “wins” for people, the planet, and the economy. However, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that sometimes, the work can be overwhelming. It can seem like there is so much to do and that there is not “enough” to accomplish the external goals.

Whether that’s enough time, energy, or even enough progress overall, it can be disheartening to compare our individual capacity to the overall scope of work ahead. However, it is important to remember that progress never happens in a vacuum; it requires collaboration, teamwork, and many people to unite for a common purpose.

If you’re like me, you often find yourself too close to the work to step back and recognize the systems you are currently working within. I know I have an excellent team around me, I have a strong network of people invested in seeing the same goals for my community, and I know that there are so many other incredible organizations working to address sustainability from various angles. However, when you’re no longer seeing the forest for the trees, it can require what I’m calling a “hard reset in nature.”

Enter the idea of a Climate Hope Retreat!

While talking with a dear friend working in climate adaptation, we both found ourselves feeling burnt out in a way that we couldn’t quite pinpoint. We saw ourselves working nonstop, and we were finding it difficult to measure the successes or acknowledge progress made along the way. However, in reflecting on what ignited our drive to action, we noticed that the burnout lessened when we were in dedicated spaces with like-minded individuals who also focused on climate and sustainability work. We devised a plan to bring a group together and learn from the experiences of one another in a meaningful space; guided by a climate grief counselor.

There were a few key elements that were crucial to the success of this retreat:



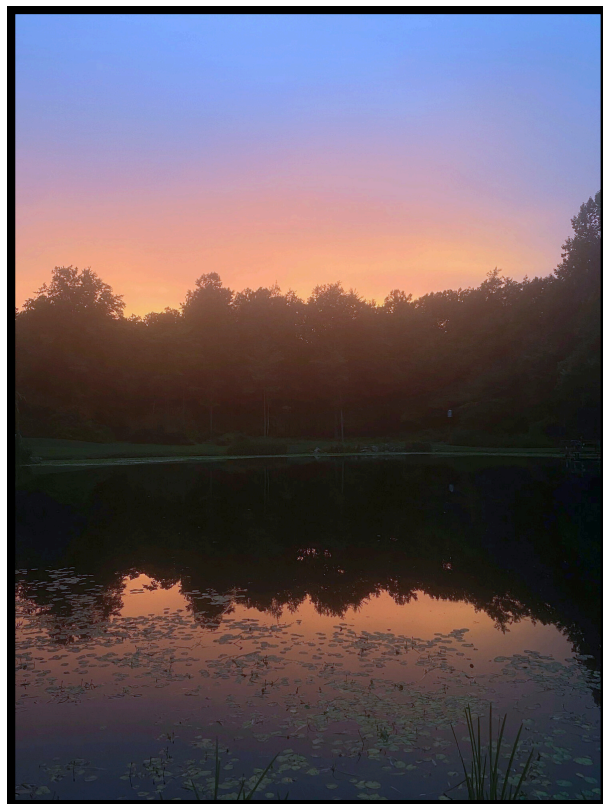
*Gathered around a composting toilet system at  
Thorpewood Learning Center in Thurmont, MD*



## Keys to a Successful Climate Hope Retreat

- **Location connected to nature**
- **Inclusion of mental health professional**
- **Varied schedule**
- **Low-cost to participants**

First and foremost, we focused on finding a location that was grounded in nature. It was important to be surrounded by reminders of what we were working to preserve.



For the record, the science behind nature-based education is astounding. Not only does it lead to deeper learning outcomes, but it can improve physical and mental well-being as well.

Additionally, we knew that it was important to have a licensed therapist with experience in climate grief counseling. In an early 2020 study, nearly 70% of adults reported experiencing “at least some anxiety” or eco-grief associated with environmental change (American Psychological Association). This number rises dramatically in younger generations and with individuals working in sustainability and climate action. Having a counselor on hand to help navigate and recognize the somatic responses associated with eco-grief and eco-anxiety was crucial to the event’s success.

We also wanted to make sure that all participants had the opportunity to lead a session highlighting their perspectives and expertise. Each of us has a unique lived experience, skillset, and outlook on varying topics or approaches. Affording everyone an opportunity to share that outlook was important not only to keep variety and engaging topics on the schedule of the retreat, but also to help celebrate the accomplishments of all in attendance.

The final key element was to keep the retreat as low-cost to participants as possible. If we want to engage as many people as possible from as many backgrounds and fields as possible, we knew it was important to ensure that cost was not a prohibiting factor for attendance.

The agenda was decided by a committee of attendees, and at the end of the retreat, I walked away with some incredible lessons learned. Not only about how I need to approach activism in a more sustainable way, but also the absolute importance of framing climate HOPE at the center of our discussions.

If I can impart but one piece of knowledge from this retreat to all those reading this perspective, it would be to **treat the advocacy you do internally with the same passion and importance as your external advocacy.** That is to say that all of the volunteering, committees, meetings, policy reviews, river cleanups, outreach, and education work that you are doing to help impact change... how are you making time for what you need to keep your cup full? Our climate grief counselor for the retreat, Kaili van Waveren, said this to me on our first day, and it had a significant impact on how I examine my day-to-day activities. In reverence of the inextricable link between the mental health crisis and the climate crisis, it's important to also identify how that appears to me. I said before that it can feel like working in a vacuum. Internal advocacy forces us to take a step back and ask: Why do I feel that? Have I taken on too much? Who can I ask for help? And for crying out loud, ASK FOR HELP (if you struggle with this last one, know you are not alone!).



One way the retreat helped to refocus and reinvigorate my capacity for action was through a small service project on the campus of our retreat. We spent a hot July afternoon pulling invasive berry bushes from a portion of the property that will soon become a native food forest. As a water quality and river enthusiast, I have participated in many trash cleanups along the Big Sioux River. While it is satisfying to see the waste pile at the end of the day, it doesn't fully address the impairments in our waterways (primarily *E. coli* and sedimentation). In

pulling wineberries, however, we were directly fixing the issue of invasive plants for this wild and beautiful space. It was a major win, and a reminder that small actions have a meaningful and lasting impact. And it was a reminder that those hundreds of pounds of trash removed from the BSR each year are helping to improve the habitat for marine species as well!

We also made a point to learn nature-focused crafts that centered around reusing what otherwise might be considered "trash." I brought a paper bag full of discarded mail that we repurposed into seed paper. These papers will be gifted as cards, invitations, business cards, and more, where they will be given new life. At the end of their life cycle, they will provide beneficial habitats for pollinators and will grow strong, long roots to help stabilize the soil.

After the retreat, I saw a noticeable shift in my perspective. Small wins were easier to recognize, and they have since felt much more sustaining.

While there will always be more work ahead, this retreat helped me refocus on the positive work that is being done all around me. I hope to see this model come to Sioux Falls in the near future. There are so many people working tirelessly to move the needle for a cleaner, greener community here that could use a collective moment of celebration, and I look forward to helping uplift you all in the future.





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