

Young's Restaurant goes green, buys local, saves money

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Young's Restaurant and Coffee Shop on Main Street joined the green movement as workers put the finishing touches on a project that will not only reduce the size of the restaurant's ecological footprint, but also will save the business money in the long run. Young's new motto, "Being green and buying local is just the right thing to do," attempts to inspire others in the community to take the steps toward a more environmentally friendly way of life. Ken Young, the owner of Young's, recognizes the importance of sustainability and using products that are energy-efficient to run his restaurant, and wants to inspire others to do the same. With the help of the Retail Merchants Association of New Hampshire (RMANH) and the Jordan Institute, his dreams were made into a reality.



Conserving water, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, recycling, and supporting the local economy are just a few of the measures that Young's is taking to run a business that is conscious of the delicate environment. A simple yet significant change was the installation of LED (Light Emitting Diode) lights in the ceiling. "They're good for 15 years," Young said. "And they save six watts per bulb. Even though they were expensive, the payback will come back." According to the official website of Eartheasy, a program created to "inspire and inform people of protecting [the] natural environment as a source of well-being," although LED bulbs are much more costly, at \$35.95 per bulb, compared to \$1.25 for an incandescent bulb, the benefits certainly outweigh this drawback. According to Eartheasy's website, the cost for electricity to sustain the bulbs is only \$60 for an LED and \$600 for an incandescent. While LED lights only need one bulb for 50-kilowatt hours of use, it would require 42 incandescent bulbs to be used for the same time. The estimated energy savings over a 50,000-hour span at 25 bulbs per household would be \$13,913.75. Not only would less energy be used, more money would be saved.

Young's has also switched to using natural gas rather than propane, obtained newer, more efficient compressors, and replaced doors, windows and insulation in order to keep in heat. The projected savings estimate just by converting to natural gas will reduce fuel related carbon dioxide emissions by 12 percent annually, according to a statement made by Young's and RMANH.

Spray foam now fills the once empty attic, insulating the building during winter, which in turn lowers the restaurant's heating bill. Before, the vacant attic allowed heat to easily escape through the cracks. Young expects to save \$12,000 this year with the new changes.

None of this would have been possible without Joe Lajewski, energy efficiency program manager at RMANH, Young said. "Joe has been my left hand," he joked. Lajewski said that the first goal among many for the RMANH is to provide education and support for business owners. "There tends to be confusion between efficiency and conservation—[businesses] think that they will have to 'do without' and change their practices," he said in an email.

RMANH provides a three-phase energy audit program, where phase one is completely paid for by RMANH, providing basic estimates for project costs by looking at the building to evaluate potential opportunities. Phase two defines specific remedies to improve the efficiency of the building and lower utility bills, and RMANH pays for 60 percent of the cost. During phase three, implementation, RMANH rebates 20 percent of the cost of the energy-efficient measures taken. "We're there to hold [the business owner's] hand throughout the process," he said. "When making such important and expensive decisions, it is crucial to have somebody on your side."

Students at UNH are pleased to see businesses in Durham come around and make efforts to sustain the earth. Vincent Lyon, co-president of the Energy Club, believes that communities should work together to make changes. "We really have a strong connection with the Durham community," Lyons said.

Young was inspired to bring sustainable changes in his community after a trip to Tanzania where he climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. "What I learned while over there is that life is about living simply; sustain what you have and with a smile on your face," Young said. "The trip made it all come together for me with my business and my life." Young hopes to create awareness about not only going green, but what an engaged business can do from an environmental and financial standpoint.

"You just have to get up, look in the mirror, and ask, do I want to be socially responsible?" Young said.