The Stanwood Energy Challenge pulls together 16 Stanwood businesses, in 2 teams of 8, in a competition to see which team can save the most energy. The Challenge began February 3 and runs five months, through June 2014. Each team is equipped with a real-time energy monitor, an energy assessment, and energy-saving ideas they can use right away. Snohomish PUD sponsors the Challenge; PECI coordinates it. This is the second of 16 participant profiles.

Profile: Northwest Veterinary Clinic
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Spokesman: Tim Chuchna

Why did your business decide to participate in the Stanwood Energy Challenge?

“This clinic has been remodeled about four times, and there are many energy wasters around, so I thought, let’s get on board and check it out see where we are and see what we can change. So that was the big motivator: We had the opportunity and we took it!”

“Our employees really jumped on board. Everybody’s excited about it. They all watch [our real-time energy use on] the tablet that we have. They’re turning lights off, and they’re turning computers off, and doing a lot of things like that to help with the energy consumption.”

How closely do you look at your utility bills?

We monitor our energy bills every month, as far as just the dollar amount, but as far as the usage, we’re not real good at that. But after this challenge I think we will be. We’ll start checking things, and saying, OK, why are we using that much? Where is it going? What can we do to modify it?
What are your biggest energy users here?

I think the biggest thing is we have some old windows and some old glass doors up front. They’re all single-pane, and that’s a huge energy waste. The big energy user is the heat pump and the auxiliary heat, and cooling unit as well, when it’s working in the summer time. We have quite a few computers, which contribute.

What energy saving measures did you do before the Challenge started?

“Last year we replaced all the fluorescents (T12s) with new fluorescent bulbs. We had a PUD savings on that). The heat pump, we’ve been maintaining that. That’s about all we’ve done before the challenge.”

What have you learned so far? Any surprises?

“Yeah. We’re using a lot of energy early in the morning, earlier than we should be. At 5 o’clock energy consumption goes up dramatically, and stays up for about 3 hours, then we level off and it drops off a little bit. It doesn’t make sense because nobody’s here at 5 o’clock in the morning. We thought we had it fixed with the thermostat, but that’s not the only issue. I’ve got to figure out why.

What changes have you made so far?

Minor changes: making sure we’re turning lights off, turning the computers off at night, things like that. We’ve made changes to the thermostat, actually decreased the temperature of the heating a little bit, and also increased the cooling temperature a little bit. The big thing is underneath the clinic there’s a crawl space that’s getting heated for some reason. I’ve made some changes down there to see if I can stop some of the heat going out, but there’s still more work to do underneath there.

Any comments from customers or family members about our participation in the Challenge?

“Community members have noticed the sign, they’ve noticed the tablet out front, and they’ve commented on it and asked what it’s all about. They’re curious. We’ve given them a brief introduction about what we’re doing, and who the members of the team are – The Watt Watchers.”

Any advice for other businesses?

“Pay attention to details. I don’t think it’s one big thing, I think it’s a lot of little things that add up to a lot of usage. That’s what we’re finding here. And it’s just finding where the energy’s going out. It’s just inefficiencies in our windows, in our doors, and like I said, the crawl space. But nobody wants to go underneath the building… “

“We may be an underdog, but we’re going to push hard.”