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 third of 16 participant profiles.

Profile: Stanwood Hardware
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Spokesman: Walt Nicholas

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

“I thought would be fun to see what our actual usage is. I’m always interested in something mechanical or electrical. I like the Energy Challenge because I got to meet some other business owners in town. It opens up some new avenues of communication with other people. I’ll mention it to somebody who comes in for lighting, and a lot of times it’s been a business person, and I’ve been to their business, and I can say that their lighting really isn’t up to date. I’ve gotten one place that didn’t join the challenge to send in a [SnoPUD] form to get some indoor lighting redone.”

How closely do you look at your utility bills?

“I’m not the numbers guy. My brother, who’s my partner, signs the checks. The bookkeeper will sometimes say, ‘Oooh, we had a bad PUD month.’ I’m going to say anything we can do to improve things is going to save us somewhere down the road and give us some information that we can pass along.”
**What do you think are your biggest energy users?**

“I have the dashboard and I check it daily. Just by my little testing last weekend, it was the heating units, just because of the amount of air they move, and the lighting. I was surprised that the lighting was that much. Turning the heating off and just having the lights on, it’s about 5/8 to three-quarters of our daily use. I’m sure there is more efficient and better lighting.”

“I’ve been communicating via email with a few of the team members. One wants to get her outdoor sign lighting fixed, because it’s a majority of their cost, because they’ve got a big outdoor sign and it’s probably got old HO [high output] tubes in it.”

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

“Well, we re-lamped in 2009. We have a new surge strip that has a pass-through circuit on it, so if you turn off one thing, it’ll turn off everything that’s on the strip, except for one item that you want to leave on, like a computer or a light. We’ve been using those for a couple of years just to turn down a computer that doesn’t need to be on all night."

**What changes have you made so far?**

Just trying to only have what we need. I’ve noticed some people turning off the bathroom lights, and the back warehouse lights. We have a warehouse that’s really only in use one day a week when the shipment comes in, so to keep those lights off. And adjusting the thermostats. It’s interesting what it brings to light. But little things like that do add up. We need to redo OUR sign lighting – it’s actually not working right now!”

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

“I don’t know if there’s been anything publicized, like in the local papers or in the Everett Herald. I don’t always get a chance to talk to every customer, but if we’re over here talking about light bulbs, I try to make mention of it. As soon as I can get the dashboard up, it would be right there. Projects are projects. I have two computers that are dead, and little things that need to be done.”

**Any advice for other businesses?**

“A couple of the businesses made huge improvements just by talking with their people. The vet clinic has gotten a huge reduction in his energy use. You’ve got multiple employees in multiple rooms, multiple owners. He was down here to pick up a sump pump because he had water under the building. It was built in the 50s and added onto multiple times. Those are always difficult. It’s just interesting to see what other people are doing.