

STANWOOD energy CHALLENGE

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; PEI coordinates it. This is the fifth of 16 participant profiles.

Profile: Amigo Restaurant

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Spokesman: Jose Amador, Owner



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

“We joined the Energy Challenge because we thought it would be a great idea. Not only are we going to be trying to save money – learning how to run a business, every little penny counts – and obviously it was something fun for the business to join. I’m having a lot of fun with it!”

What are the biggest energy users in your business?

“The biggest one is my HVAC unit and my refrigeration. I’ve got multiple coolers going at the same time. It has to be on, I can’t turn it down; I’ve got food and beer in there.”

How closely do you look at your utility bills?

“Really closely, because for a restaurant this size, you’re looking at a huge bill, and every little step counts. Especially with the people who work here, I feel like I’m on top of them – I feel like I’m my father working in the restaurant lately – ‘Turn the lights off! Shut the water off! Who touched the thermostat?’ That’s the biggest one...”



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How are your employees responding to the Energy Challenge?

“They’re enjoying it. They like to come and tease me about it. Obviously, the monitor that shows our energy consumption ... some days we’re busy and they’ll come tease me when it goes up. It keeps them focused: They know to turn things off.”

What have you learned so far? Any surprises?

“I’ve been surprised at how much my HVAC actually works, how hard it works, and how much energy it takes. I see it on the monitor – that’s the only thing running at night, the refrigeration and the HVAC. I have it set so at 10:00 the heat kicks on, and you can see an immediate spike on my monitor. So I realized I need to keep it clean, keep all the vents clean. I just got all new filters put in.”

What changes have you made so far, and what changes are you considering for the future?

“With the challenge, I’ve realized there’s LED lights that just came out, that would save me more energy than the ones I’ve been buying, so I want to go shopping soon. I’ve done pretty much all I can do, but it has brought me to speak of it with the rest of the building, the association here. I’ve been talking about putting together a meeting to get all the lights replaced, and to put in fans to circulate the air in the winter and in the summer so that the HVAC out here doesn’t have to work so hard. As you can see, it’s a lot of cubic feet to keep warm.”

Any comments from customers about your participation in the Challenge?

“I’m one of the busier restaurants in town, and I feel like a lot of people look at what I do... a lot of people ARE interested. The customers come and they love looking at the little pad. They tinker with it, and any time I see anybody playing with it, I kind of coach them through it, and they can see the competition, and who’s in my group, who’s my competitors, and see the little race going on to see who’s saving the most. And they start thinking of ideas. I love to explain it to them, and it makes them wonder about the kind of stuff they could do at home.

“I think I’m one of the biggest culprits of my group. But I am busier than last year. I’ve been staying open a little later than I had been last year, so my numbers might be a little off, but it’s OK, because we’ve been a little busier.

Any advice for other businesses?

“They need to look at every little thing, because every penny counts. I mean anything from the doors being sealed, to your lighting, to your neon signs. There’s so many ways to save money that if you’re not looking at it, it’ll literally take away your profits.”

