

FANREP AWARDS PROGRAM 2009

1. **AWARD NAME:** INNOVATIVE PROGRAM AWARD

2. **NOMINATOR:** Robert A. Kluson
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3. **NOMINEE:** Sustainability Theater
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4. **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:**

Sustainability Theater is a new educational program that was initiated by Sarasota County Extension in 2006 and has conducted over 20 presentations to approximately 200 persons. It was acknowledged by Sarasota County Community Services Business Center in July, 2008, with awards for outstanding performance to its coordinators, i.e., the nominee and his 6 participating librarians.

Issue addressed: Sustainability Theater offers educational on the major issues of sustainable living at the local and global levels. The issues discussed have included global warming; alternative energies; food-based carbon footprint; water issues among competing land uses; and sustainable agriculture & food systems.

Target audience: Sustainability Theater is targeted to the general public of Sarasota County. Initial audiences were patrons at the different branches of the Sarasota County library system who attended existing programs that were either lectures or video presentations. Later the audience has been expanded to include community civic groups and schools who invited presentations of Sustainability Theater.

Objectives: Sustainability Theater focuses on education to the public that will contribute to their continued participation and support of the initiatives in sustainable living by Sarasota County. Its objective is to provide a relaxed and creative setting for community conversation and learning. Many times the presentation of issues in sustainability results in polarization among the public

due to misunderstanding of the facts and/or ignorance that the facts are changing as fast as the science which requires constant learning of these topics. In addition, the educational methods and materials used strive to reinforce learning based on the theory of multiple intelligences by the audience. Specifically, it's emphasizing the learning modes of visual, auditory and social learning. Finally, it is intended to provide a partnership with the Sarasota County library system which is also tasked with educating the public about sustainability, especially during their annual Sustainability Month in September.

Educational methods and materials: the educational format of Sustainability Theater focuses on a specific topic of sustainability, using a standardized combination of 1) up-to-date videos, 2) PowerPoint presentation, 3) a featured speaker who will facilitate group discussions, and 4) a display of books on the topic and available through the Sarasota County library system. The use of the word "theater" in the program's name is intended to describe the presentation as analogous to going out to the theater and then discussing the merits of the film with your friends.

Resources involved: the participants involved with the nominee in Sustainable Theater include:

a) the reference librarians of the Sarasota County library system who suggest the topics of the presentations. These librarians are also scheduling the topics of their choice in order to meet the needs of their patrons at their individual branch libraries.

b) a speaker bureau of 3 volunteers and the nominee. The nominee assists the volunteers in the final preparation of the Powerpoint presentation and the selection of the video, as well as being in attendance to help facilitate the group discussion.

(people, agencies/cooperators, funds, supplies or equipment):

For each presentation a promotional flyer is produced, in addition to the regular advertising by the Sarasota County Extension and library system (see example attachments). These flyers are made available at all of the branch libraries in order to alert all patrons who may be interested in attending the presentations.

Evaluation results: surveys after each presentation have indicated a 95% level of satisfaction with a 90% level of knowledge gained by the audience. Informal feedback from the librarian coordinators resulted in a 100% level of satisfaction in the quality and timeliness of the topics, as well as assisting them meet their goals in educating county residents about sustainability.

Implications for future programs: the success of Sustainability Theater has gained the attention of other county agencies and is resulting in more requests for presentations. For example, the agencies include the Sarasota County Health Department's projects in community health and the Sarasota County Economic Development Council's efforts in diversification of the local economy.

Program innovation: the uniqueness of Sustainability Theater is its goal to offer education on sustainability issues as both entertaining and informative. The use of the videos is the primary approach to provide the entertainment. However, the continuing progress of research on sustainability issues means that the videos can quickly be out-of-date. Whenever possible we work with the library system to purchase the most up-to-date videos but, when not possible, we include the updated information in our Powerpoint presentations.

FANREP member's role: the nominee provides the coordination with the participating librarians and speakers for all events of Sustainability Theater, as well as initiating the planning and designing of new topics for future presentations.

JUDGING CRITERIA: the goal of Sustainability Theater is to present on a local and participatory level the educational impact of the television media on today's sustainability issues, such as the cable channels for National Geographic and Sundance. Specifically, it addresses the fact that such visual media is inherently a passive educational approach that may or may not produce desired behavior changes. In addition, Sustainability Theater offers its presentations to county residents in a safe and familiar environment, i.e., their neighborhood library. Its attendance and evaluations demonstrates the acceptance by the general public. Finally, it offers a format that is easily reproduced in every county in FL because all of them have library systems, as well as Cooperative Extension offices.