

Brunswick Congregation Helps Low Income Families Save Energy

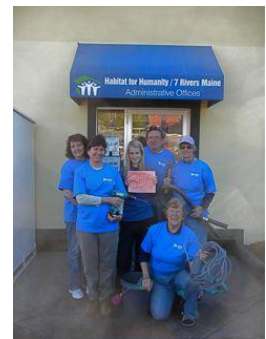
By Ellen McClaran, UUA Green Sanctuary Team volunteer and UU Ministry for Earth board member

The UU Church of Brunswick, ME (UUCB) became a certified Green Sanctuary congregation in 2011. Like many UU congregations around the country, it partnered with Habitat for Humanity for its major ongoing environmental justice project, which is required for certification. With Habitat's emphasis on relationship building between

volunteers and homeowners, with everyone working together side-by-side toward a common goal, an alliance with the organization usually leads to productive and meaningful justice-making activities. Environmental equity projects can include water-wise landscaping and edible gardens at newly built homes and weatherization of existing homes.

UUCB chose Habitat's Step One Weatherization Program, which engages low-income families who apply to make their homes more heat-efficient at minimal cost. Four teams of church members (two are shown in the photograph) were trained by Habitat. Since 2009, each team has worked on two to three homes each from September to November. UUCB plans to continue as long as the program continues.

When its GS application was submitted in Sept. 2011, the teams had already weatherized nearly two dozen homes, thus reducing the homes' carbon footprints while helping low income families to save money on heating bills. The Green Sanctuary Committee notes that the UUCB-Habitat for Humanity covenant relationship has been strengthened by this project and feedback has been positive. The format of the work was even changed somewhat based on UUCB's recommendations.



See photos and learn more about UU Church of Brunswick's other projects on its [Green Sanctuary Committee page](#).

If your congregation would like to learn more about UUCB's experience with this project, please contact Robin Hansen, Green Sanctuary chair, through Shirley Bernier, church administrator, at uubruns@gwi.net.