

“Sustainability: A concept commonly defined as using natural resources wisely in order to both benefit from them and preserve them for future generations.”

to make



BLOOMINGTON

MORE SUSTAINABLE

The Men and Women at the Forefront



BY **Jeremy Shere** | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **Steve Raymer**

When it comes to sustainable living, Indiana isn't exactly at the top of the list. In fact, in a recent "green state" ranking compiled by the Natural Marketing Institute, the Hoosier state came in dead last. (Washington was first, followed by Colorado and Massachusetts.) That's no surprise, given that we depend on coal for 93 percent of our electricity.

But the news isn't all bad for environmentally minded Bloomingtonians. Because our city, at least compared to the rest of the state, is a model of sustainability—a concept commonly defined as using natural resources wisely in order to both benefit from them and preserve them for future generations.

Locally based organizations such as Earth Care Bloomington, Southern Indiana Renewable Energy Network, and the Center for Sustainable Living are leading efforts to promote energy conservation, renewable energy, and many other grassroots sustainability projects. The Bloomington city government, meanwhile, is making sustainability a priority by moving forward with dozens of initiatives to make Bloomington a greener, more ecologically friendly town. Local writers—most notably award-winning author Scott Russell Sanders—write passionately about the importance of caring for nature. And Indiana University, through its newly created Office of Sustainability, has launched several ambitious sustainability-related programs, including the past "themester" devoted to sustainability. IU is also home to several world-renowned experts working on climate change, wind power, and other "green" topics.

Within all of these and other organizations are hundreds of people who tirelessly devote their time to the cause. Bloomington may not yet be perfectly sustainable (no city is), but without their efforts, our city wouldn't be nearly as far along the road to sustainability as it is. Here, profiled, are some of the men and women leading the charge.



SCOTT RUSSELL SANDERS author

For Scott Sanders, sustainability refers to more than energy conservation, eating locally, or walking or riding a bike to work instead of driving. Throughout more than 20 published books, the award-winning writer has returned again and again to the broad themes that animate his deep engagement with human-made and natural realms.

“At the root of sustainability is a concern for fairness and justice,” says Sanders, who in his most recent book, *A Conservationist Manifesto* (2009), makes an impassioned case for the value of respecting the Earth and caring for its human and non-human creatures. “It’s a matter of acting in a way to make life better than it otherwise would be for future generations, for people not yet born who we’ll never know.”

For Sanders, sustainability depends as much on human culture and institutions such as schools, government, museums,

‘A key concept in my writing and thinking has been an opposition to our culture’s obsession with mobility and novelty, with trends and fashion.’

and libraries as it does on environmental concerns such as clean air and water. “To take seriously its long-term well-being, a city like Bloomington must—and in many ways does—educate its citizens to engender a sense of community and communal responsibility,” he says. “A key concept in my writing and thinking has been an opposition to our culture’s obsession with mobility and novelty, with trends and fashion. For me, sustainability refers most meaningfully to understanding in depth where you are and what you have, to being deeply attentive to one’s place and committed to improving it.”

Although Bloomington is by no means perfect, Sanders says, the nearly two-century presence of the university has provided an invaluable sense of continuity—a crucial ingredient for sustainable living.

“The beauty of the university, the quality of its architecture, the care for its grounds—all are the result of two hundred years of human care aimed at preserving the institution for future generations,” says Sanders, who taught in the English department at IU for 38 years before his recent retirement. “We’re fortunate to live in a place where such care has been taken and that exemplifies what we’re capable of at our best.”

‘The issues we’re dealing with are broad and far-reaching, so there’s no point in doing things only on a small scale.’



BILL BROWN IU Director of Sustainability

Although the recently created IU Office of Sustainability has only two full-time employees, its first-ever director, Bill Brown, is thinking big. In less than two years he’s jump-started working groups on transportation, recycling, sustainable computing, and energy on campus; expanded an internship program resulting in several innovative, student-led sustainability initiatives; and was a driving force behind the recently completed College of Arts and Sciences “themester” on sustainability.

“The issues we’re dealing with are broad and far-reaching, so there’s no point in doing things only on a small scale,” says Brown, who started his job in March 2009.

Before coming to Bloomington, Brown, who studied architecture at Ball State University, made his name as an architect specializing in sustainable design. In the early ’90s he was part of the Greening of the White House initiative and later founded Sustainable Evansville, an organization promoting environmentally sustainable economic development in southwestern Indiana. In 2006, Brown received an Award of Outstanding Achievement from Ball State’s College of Architecture and Planning Alumni Board.

Eventually, though, having done as much as he could to promote sustainability as an architect, including the first net-zero-energy public library in America (in Chrisney, Indiana),

Brown was ready for a new, bigger challenge. When he got wind of a national search for IU’s first director of sustainability, he jumped at the chance to return to his undergraduate alma mater to concentrate 100 percent on sustainability.

“I came to Bloomington because I wanted a job where I could influence more people on a wider scale, and a university seemed like a natural fit,” says Brown. “My goal was and has been to foster collaboration among the IU extended family to find sustainable solutions to complex economic, social, and environmental problems faced by the university.”

Under the guidance of Brown and Assistant Director Emilie Rex, sustainability interns have led dozens of successful programs, such as Electronic Waste Collection Days. Partnering with Apple, Inc. last year, IU and IUPUI sustainability interns collected more than 400 tons of electronic waste—including old cell phones, computers, and TVs—for recycling. This past August, interns launched the “Hoosier to Hoosier” sale initiative



by collecting discarded furniture, refrigerators, and other items left behind by departing students and selling them to incoming students. The event raised more than \$10,000 for Habitat for Humanity and United Way of Monroe County.

For Brown, student-led and more comprehensive efforts, including a university “Master Plan” geared in large part toward making the university more energy efficient, are only the beginning of what he believes will be a growing, ongoing drive to make IU more sustainable.

“We [the Office of Sustainability] may have a small staff, but we have a growing network of hundreds of faculty, staff, student, and community volunteers to maximize our impact,” Brown says. “We’re constantly fielding calls and e-mails from people wanting to get involved with what we’re doing. Over the next few years I think we’re going to see some remarkable changes, making IU Bloomington a much more sustainable campus.”



JACQUI BAUER

Sustainability Coordinator for the City of Bloomington



What Bill Brown does for IU, Jacqui Bauer does for all of Bloomington. As the city's first sustainability coordinator, she's tasked not only with thinking up creative ways to make Bloomington greener, but making them happen, too.

"There were already a lot of interesting sustainability ideas and efforts going on, and the idea was that it would be more effective if somebody was looking at the big picture and pulling everything together," says Bauer, who began work in May 2010. "I'm thrilled that I was chosen to be that person."

Although only 39, Bauer has already had what for many people would be a lifetime of experience in environmental activism. After several years working on environment-related issues in Los Angeles and Japan, she came to IU in 1996 to study environmental policy and natural resource management in the School of Public and Environmental Affairs master's program, earning Master of Public Affairs and Master of Science in Environmental Science degrees. Following graduation, Bauer served as state director of the Indiana Rural Community Assistance Program, working on drinking water and sanitation projects. In 2005 she returned to IU to work with researcher Elinor Ostrom, who shared the

2009 Nobel Prize in Economics. Bauer served as assistant director of Ostrom's Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis until last spring.

In her new job, Bauer focuses her energy exclusively on Bloomington. And although she has just gotten started, Bauer has already set in motion several ambitious efforts, including a community-wide program offering free energy audits to anyone who's interested. "People know there are things they can do to use energy more efficiently, but sometimes it's hard to know where to start," Bauer says. "The idea is to remove the barriers by going into people's homes to help them understand how much energy they use and what they can do to lower their electricity and gas bills by doing simple things like insulating windows and walls and investing in energy-saving devices."

Bauer is also working with a task force charged with making Bloomington a more bike-friendly city. In 2003 the League of American Bicyclists designated Bloomington a "bronze-level" biking community. In 2010 that ranking was upgraded to "silver," making Bloomington one of only 27 U.S. cities to have achieved that level. But to become a "platinum-level" community, of which there are only three in the country, the city has a long way to go.

"We're talking about more bike paths and lanes, bike traffic lights, enforcing traffic rules to make city biking safer," says Bauer, who has been working with the task force for the past several months. "It's a big challenge, but I think we can make it happen."

Because sustainability is such a broad, complex issue, Bauer plans to focus on several key areas, including transportation and planning, green building and housing, food and urban agriculture, energy efficiency, and waste and recycling.

"It's a big job and we have a lot to do to improve and become more sustainable," says Bauer. "But in many ways Bloomington is a great model for towns our size, and if we work together, we'll get there."

'People know there are things they can do to use energy more efficiently, but sometimes it's hard to know where to start.'



MADI HIRSCHLAND

founder, Earth Care Bloomington

Four years ago, Madi Hirschland would not have called herself an environmentalist.

Although she was aware of climate change, Hirschland—an expert in microfinance and poverty alleviation—focused her considerable energies on improving life in impoverished, mainly developing countries. Then, in 2006, while preparing to move her family—husband Larry and children Daniel, 13, and Tamar, 11—to Kenya for a year for work, she made a discovery that changed her work focus and her life.

"Researching medicines we'd need for the kids, I learned that malaria had barely been

present three decades earlier in the area we were moving to," Hirschland recalls. But in the last few decades, she found, changes in rainfall patterns related to climate change had resulted in large bodies of stagnant water that attracted malarial mosquitoes.

During her year in Africa, Hirschland worked with and met many Kenyans who'd lost children to climate-change-related malaria and felt she could no longer be a passive observer. "I had to ask myself where I was going to make the most difference and what was most important," Hirschland says. "Microfinance or climate change?"

Back in Bloomington, Hirschland increasingly put her microfinance work aside to work on climate change. Although she suspected that there was great potential in faith communities working together on environmental issues, she could never have imagined how quickly it would come together. In 2007, working on behalf of Beth Shalom Synagogue, she partnered with several Christian congregations to get a grant to install bike racks at local churches and the synagogue. Within four months, the group, now called Earth Care Bloomington, had grown to

20 congregations whose commitment to curbing climate change ran well beyond bike racks.

"All of our faiths tell us that we have an ethical responsibility to care for creation," Hirschland says. "It makes tremendous sense for us to talk to each other and act together to do the right thing."

Beyond raising awareness about climate change, Earth Care has launched an ambitious campaign to help members of its partner congregations significantly cut their energy usage. Using a 12-month plan, the initiative helps people use less energy by helping them take on high-impact tasks such as investing in energy-saving supplies and devices.

Although changing peoples' minds and behavior is a tall order, Hirschland is optimistic and already sees progress. "People I know who are not environmentalists will tell me that they turn down the heat at night or walk or bicycle to work instead of driving," Hirschland says. "We're very close to a tipping point on climate change; we just need to join hands and take it a little further."

'All of our faiths tell us that we have an ethical responsibility to care for creation.'



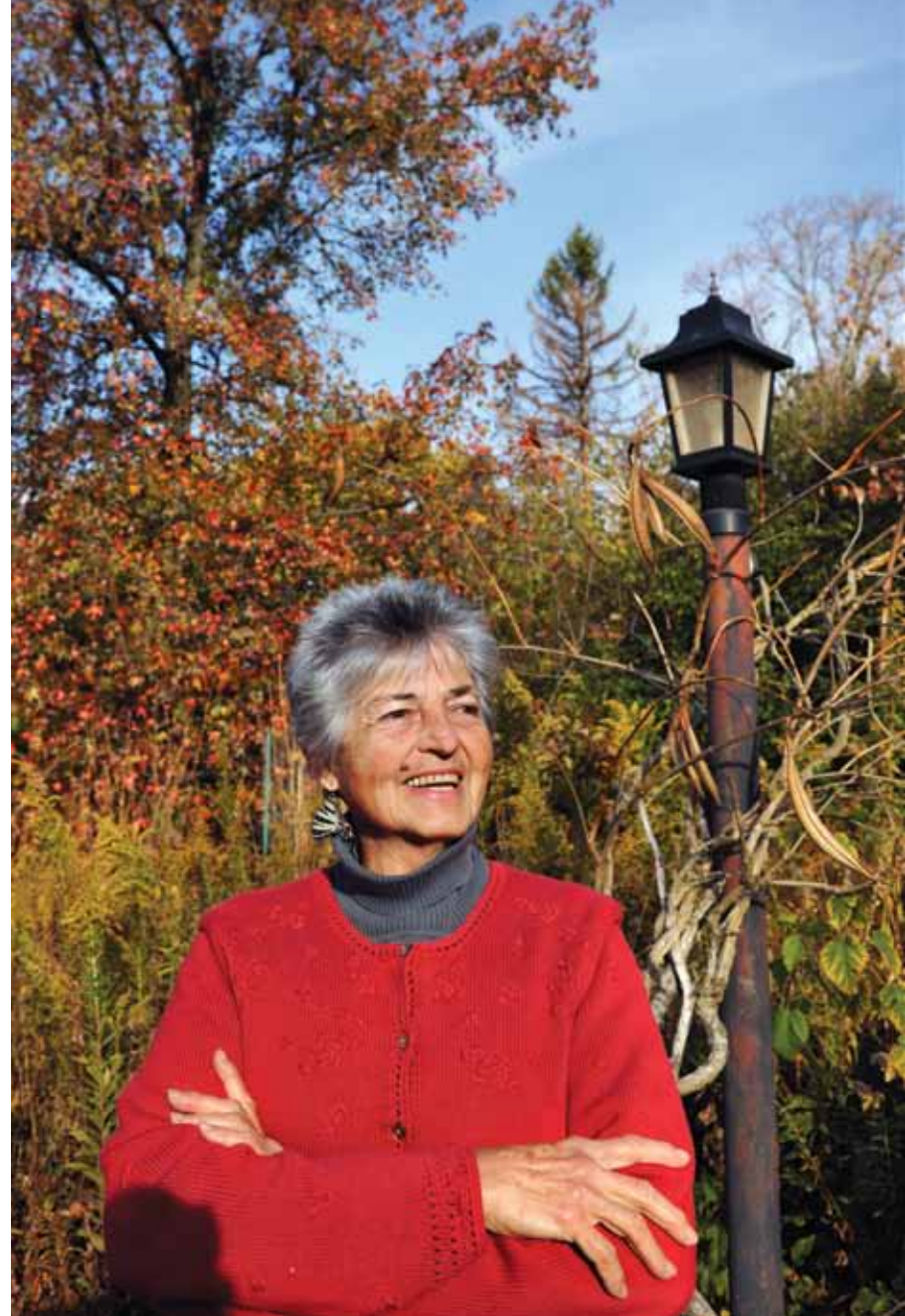
Although Lucille Bertuccio grew up in Brooklyn in the 1940s, surrounded by concrete and steel, she was always a country girl at heart.

“I loved learning about plants and animals and playing outdoors,” says Bertuccio, who spent as much of her childhood as possible exploring Brooklyn’s Prospect Park, just a few blocks from her parent’s apartment. It wasn’t until Bertuccio had children of her own, though, that she began a career as a naturalist, working throughout the ’70s and ’80s as a nature guide, a cooperative extension agent (teaching Brooklyn school kids about horticulture and the natural world), and as one of the first urban park rangers in New York City.

When Bertuccio came to Bloomington in 1988 to earn a master’s in parks administration, she found a community primed for environmental action. After deciding to stay and make Bloomington her home, in 1990 Bertuccio was part of group led by local environmental activist Christine Glaser that founded the Center for Sustainable Living (CSL), a nonprofit organization aimed at promoting and enabling environmental and sustainability projects. One of the center’s first sponsored efforts in the early ’90s was a community bike project to educate people on how to maintain and renovate bicycles.

In the nearly 20 years since, CSL has helped jump-start dozens of successful initiatives, including Bloomington Transportation Options for People (B-TOP), advocating for bike lanes and on-street parking (an alternative to building parking lots and garages); Oasis, a “permaculture” project focused on living in harmony with nature; the Southern Indiana Renewable Energy Network (SIREN); and Discardia, an initiative to recycle textiles and other reusable materials, to name only a few.

As president of CSL, Bertuccio does her best to practice what she preaches. She does not own a car, opting instead to walk or ride her bike to do grocery and other shopping. Her front lawn is a well-



LUCILLE BERTUCCIO

President of Center for Sustainable Living

tended vegetable garden — not only providing food but a testament to Bertuccio’s undiminished love of plants and the natural world.

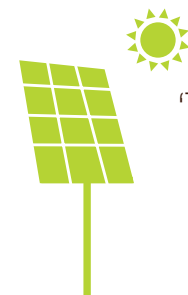
“This planet is fantastic—the more you look at what’s going on in nature, the more fantastic it appears,” she says. “But in our quest for energy, in getting in the car and driving a mile to get groceries that were trucked into the supermarket from thousands of miles away, we’re destroying the planet. I want an Earth that I’m proud to leave to future generations, and I think that’s possible. But it’s going to take all of us working together to make it happen.”



‘I want an Earth that I’m proud to leave to future generations, and I think that’s possible.’

ALEX JARVIS

owner, Solar Systems of Indiana



‘The cost of coal-fired energy is going up, but the sun doesn’t raise its rates.’

Indiana is and for the foreseeable future will be a place where nearly all electricity is made by burning coal. But if solar installer Alex Jarvis’ busy schedule is any indication, an alternative—solar energy—is beginning to catch on. Since 2006 he’s installed solar arrays at nearly 20 sites in the region. This past October alone, Jarvis began installing two pole-mounted solar panels at the South Central Indiana Rural Electric Membership Corporation headquartered in Martinsville, and he installed 20 solar modules on the roof of Bloomingfoods on West 6th and Madison streets.

“A lot of people think it’s too expensive to invest in a home solar array, but when they see businesses and other people putting up panels, it seems more doable,” says Jarvis, owner and sole operator of Solar Systems of Indiana. “The cost of coal-fired energy is going up, but the sun doesn’t raise its rates. So solar panels are a great hedge against future energy costs.”

A self-described tech geek, Jarvis got his start as a solar installer when, in 2005, he lost his job at Otis Elevator when the company moved its manufacturing operations overseas. Cleaning

out his desk, Jarvis noticed an article on solar panels and right away knew that he wanted to pursue a career in solar energy. For the next several months he drove across the country to attend solar seminars and learn from experienced solar technicians, often sleeping in his car to save money. “I went all-in on solar,” Jarvis says. “There was no Plan B.”

Jarvis’ efforts paid off, and today he is one of the leading solar installers and technicians in the state. Although he recognizes that solar energy is still a niche technology in coal-rich Indiana, he senses that people are slowly but surely starting to see the light.

“People I’ve worked with who’ve installed solar panels tend to become extra aware of their energy use, because the more efficiently they use energy, the more they get out of the panels,” Jarvis says. “So I see solar owners turning off lights, using more power strips, and generally doing whatever they can to be able to squeeze every kilowatt of energy out of their panels. When you’re creating your own energy and don’t have to rely on the electric company for everything, it’s literally empowering.” ✨

