

1. As I look at your conference program, I see two ideas that have been with me for years: the need for huge changes (for example, an 80% diversion of waste by 2023) and the perennial consolation of those of us who, individually, feel very weak at the prospect of those changes, but who try nevertheless to accomplish them one step at a time.

2. I represent a school that has been in Kansas City for 100 years. In a sense, the footprint of that school has grown considerably. It is now two schools on two plots of ground, and its population has multiplied even more. In an absolute sense, the two schools surely produce more waste than the original 42 students and 3 faculty. I lack the information to compare our per capita footprints, then versus now, but I don't doubt that they, too, have increased over the years, as have the footprints of every American.

3. I came to the English Department at Rockhurst High School in 1999, after seven years of undergraduate teaching and, before that, 20 years in the Army. I knew that every high school teacher should wear at least two hats, but I kept a low profile during my first year and concentrated on recalibrating my teaching to the language skills of teenage males. Meanwhile, I was driving 42 miles each way from Leavenworth, Kansas, to 9301 State Line Road.

In the Spring of 2000, one of my English students, Dan Heryer, who happened to be a leader in the school's Ecology Club, persuaded me to become involved with that club. At the time, I was sympathetic to the club's mission,

but hardly a practitioner. The original environmentalist in my household is my wife, Rita. She handled most of the household recycling while I mowed the lawn, drove solo to work, and ate vegetables and herbs that she grew in the garden or bought at the grocery store.

4. During our Army years, I was even more profligate: an armor officer helping to lead mechanized units that consumed vast quantities of food, petroleum, ammunition, and other resources as they rolled across the countryside, churning up fields, knocking down trees and lamp posts, chewing up curbs along roadways, side-swiping or flattening automobiles, spilling oil from disabled vehicles, etc. On the other hand, I had lots of experience with what the Army called logistics; I knew how to clean up messes and get the resources in place for a mission. So what could be difficult about managing a high school recycling program?

5. Fortunately for me, the school had a long tradition of recycling,

6. and The Society of Jesus has an even longer tradition of grounding human spirituality in the God who reveals himself through nature.

When Brother Eilert, a Jesuit memorialized in the Eilert Ecology Club, was recycling aluminum cans at Rockhurst, I was rumbling through Germany, adding no small amount to this country's growing footprint. At the same time, my wife and I were learning how to reduce our own solid waste

because, as any proper German town would do, Bubenreuth provided trash cans that held less than a quarter of what we'd expected in the U.S. Meanwhile, having moved up from a line company to the battalion staff, I was seeing much more of the huge logistical tail that makes mechanized warfare possible.

7. Back in the U.S., civilians were coping with the Arab Oil Embargo. The Army in Europe began to modify training with an eye to saving fuel, but I enjoyed more time in garrison and, because U.S. soldiers still had generous rations of subsidized fuel stamps, my family had more time to act like tourists. In 1976, before moving back to the states, I placed an order for a Jeep Cherokee, our first SUV. After all, Rita and I had two children. We would pick up the jeep in New Jersey and drive from there to Ft. Knox, Kentucky, marveling at the 55 mph freeways after years of autobahns with no speed limits.

8. A few years later I was back in Germany with the 2nd Armored Division for a 30-day maneuver. We had new tanks that consumed even more gallons per mile than their predecessors, and the Army was already planning to replace their 105 mm cannon with 122 mm cannon. My family had two more children and so we traded in the six-passenger Cherokee for a nine-passenger Suburban.

9. The Arab Oil Embargo was an unpleasant but fading memory, but academics were beginning to write about something even worse. At the time, concerns such as earth's "carrying capacity" were not on my radar screen. Though I

was very aware of regional and national resource issues, I had no expectation of an impending global constraint. I was a thoroughgoing techno-philiac; I believed that any resource problem could be solved or at least sensibly managed with a new gadget, a new source of energy, or fair and adequate redistribution. I still saw planet earth as an infinitely expandable pie.

Meanwhile, the Jesuits and others were witnessing to a growing gap between developed and underdeveloped countries, and they began to talk about environmental causes. The issue arose during the Jesuits' 33rd General Congregation, in 1983, and has garnered increasing attention in

10. the 34th General Congregation, 1995,

11. and the most recent, 35th General Congregation, in 2008.

In 2001, as I began to advise the Eilert Ecology Club, I began with numerous meetings to clarify the club's vision. Many in the faculty and staff saw this group as "the recycling club," and recycling occupied most of the club's time—a fact that remains even today. Yet the members had broader issues. When I asked them to create a club logo, the extent of those issues was both clear and daunting.

12. One of the students came with this drawing of the bitten apple, and everyone immediately said "yes." I was pleased with the obvious connection to Genesis. The boys were

thinking like prophets! Then we haggled for several days as to whether the motto should be "Save Some For Us" or "Save Some for Others." The latter, I argued, was more consistent with one of the Society's mottos, being "Men for Others." We didn't want to be selfish, did we? On the other hand, the teenagers found in "Save Some For Us" an appropriate urgency. They believed that overshoot would begin to bite within their lifetimes. If they couldn't prevent it within their lifetimes, there might be nothing left for their children. So the club's motto has stuck with its emphasis on "Us."

The next task was to work out a strategy that supported the full scope of students' environmental concerns while keeping up with the school's recycling. No one else wanted that mission, and least of all the school's maintenance department. They were wary of inheriting the fallout from students' "good ideas." Moreover, the recycling mission itself needed more scope. Why only paper and aluminum? The school was talking about replacing its soda fountains in the cafeteria with vending machines, refrigerators, and plastic bottles.

13. We sampled trash cans in the school and extrapolated what we found to the number of trash cans in total. We could see that paper and aluminum were just part of the recycling potential. In addition to what made its way into trash cans, every day there were tens of cardboard boxes going straight to the trash dumpster from various parts of the building.

The Eilert Ecology Club is a small organization: ten or twelve active students as the school year begins, dwindling to five or six as academics and other activities place increasing pressure on students week by week.

14. Yet, over the years, the scope of recycling has increased, an accomplishment made possible by the slow work of coordinating achievable routines and sharing more of the responsibility across the school population.

15. Club members make the rounds of offices every Tuesday and Thursday morning, collecting from desk-side bins.

16. As the morning announcements begin, one or two of them stand near the center of each of the classroom levels and receive recyclables from classroom representatives. Having collected from the classrooms, they park the recycling barrels at a place near the cafeteria loading dock.

17. During the day, cafeteria volunteers, office staff, and maintenance staff bring in more recyclables collected from their various places of interest.

18. Librarians collect cell phones and ink cartridges from a bin inside the library, and from their mail boxes in the faculty studio.

19. After School, work-grant students and students doing time for disciplinary infractions will pick up more

recyclables from inside the school and from bins for bottles and cans positioned around athletic fields and parking lots.

20-22. At the cafeteria loading dock, they sort through and repackage the recyclables.

23. By a combination of personal example and shared responsibility, we borrow from the wisdom of Christian leadership to foster a community of men and women for others, looking for ways to reduce our footprint step by step.

24. Here is a summary of our recycling over the ten academic years just ended. The school has grown in that time, both in numbers of people and in the size of its facilities. We remain far from the goal of 80% diversion of solid waste, and we are just beginning to measure our waste in other areas.

Our good news is the expanded scope of recycling and the reduction in paper consumed. Beneath that good news may be an even bigger footprint in our use of electricity, which, in this part of the country, is the dirtiest form of energy.

25-29. I mentioned that students in the Ecology Club have broader environmental interests than recycling. In the Summer and Fall of 2001, I began to read the World Wildlife Fund's "Living Planet" reports and began to share that information with students and other faculty. The history and pace of global overshoot was coming into

focus, but the Al Qaeda attacks of September caused many to focus on political and military causes.

30-34. Two years later I had a son in Afghanistan, and by 2006 he was in Iraq. From those places he wrote of conflicts far deeper than U.S. or international politics: it was the age-old story of competition for basic resources in exhausted regions of the world.

35. Steve asked me to talk about not only our successes at Rockhurst, but of impediments to further success. Among those impediments I would highlight just two:

Cheap Energy. We all experience the inefficiencies of busyness: the unending pressure to get more production from fewer people by means of technological leverage, all of which leads to increased waste. "Haste makes Waste," and in our case, cheap fossil fuel has magnified both haste and waste because, for a time, it has made tolerable the cost of our busyness. Now, as we begin to see and feel the true cost of fossil fuels, we will be forced into more sustainable behavior.

Rational Self Interest. The term may be a euphemism for selfishness, but we live in a culture that gives it legitimacy, so we call it "rational." The irony is that, in a world of depleting resources, selfishness will accelerate our movement toward collapse whereas self-sacrifice and communal effort can turn us toward sustainability. Therefore a change toward sustainability will require a change of culture.

Rockhurst High School will have to change as much as any other school, and in some ways more. A closer look at the aerial photograph will clarify some the challenges.

36. Room for recycling dumpsters is not as easy to find since construction of our second gymnasium. Meantime, the volume of plastic bottles requires that we haul them ourselves to regional recycling centers.

37. In 2002, when we launched the recycling of plastic bottles, we had room for another dumpster but no one would give us a dumpster for that purpose.

38-40. I carried the bottles myself to a regional recycling center, and then found students to take over.

41. Now we have a multi-use dumpster from Deffenbaugh, but the cost of fuel has reduced the frequency of dumpster pickups and we're still hauling plastic to regional centers. The system remains precarious and I'm looking for affordable, energy-efficient ways to compact and bale the plastic.

42. Besides the daily recycling that I have previously described, Rockhurst has two locker cleanout days, in December and May, that are high-volume, high-intensity events. Over the years, I have managed to moderate student and staff behavior so that locker cleanout is less of a "mad minute" ("Remember, people, the sooner we finish cleaning out our lockers, the sooner we can get back to our classes

and then go home!") and more of a prayerful, deliberate sorting of a semester's accumulation of stuff.

We now have the school's pastoral department collecting and sorting reusable, discarded school supplies for local and international charities. The book store gleans reusable textbooks for discounted sales to next year's students, and the Ecology Club, reinforced with students from my English classes, sort out the recyclables.

43-48. Here are pictures of the final sorting, after most students have cleaned out their lockers and returned to their classrooms.

49. The aerial photo was apparently taken on a weekend or early evening because, besides that eastward-leaning shadow from the Cellular Phone antenna, the parking lots are not jam-packed. Over 90% of the school population commutes by automobile. About 62% of students and 20% of faculty and staff carpool, but the freshmen have no choice but to carpool, nor do most of the sophomores until their second semester. 44% of Juniors carpool, and 48% of seniors. About 3% of students ride a bus to school, and fewer than 1% ride bicycles. The average distance from home to school for a Rockhurst student is 12 miles, and some travel much farther.

Two years ago, the school installed a concrete pad and benches at its city bus stop on State Line Road. On a given day, 6-12 students will ride the city bus. Parents from North Kansas City have hired a private bus to bring about 24

students to school in the morning. Those students return by carpool.

50-53. Using rebates from its recycling program, the Ecology Club bought two bike racks for Rockhurst and, in 2006, I began riding a city bus and a bicycle for about half of my commute to school. Three other faculty have joined in the effort, and there are now two or three students biking to school.

54. As environmental stresses continue and human behavior becomes more volatile, Rockhurst students are assuming adult responsibilities and many of them are becoming leaders. After my son, there are now Rockhurst graduates in the military and deploying overseas. Joseph Hand was our most recent to make the news, earning a bronze star for his service in 2006.

55. At the same time, the school is trying in a systematic way to develop more environmental leaders to give us peaceful alternatives for a sustainable future. It is a goal we undertook last summer at a symposium of the Jesuit Secondary Education Association. This summer we'll be reporting on our progress, and we've planned to continue the effort for at least the next four years.

Even before this deliberate effort to produce environmental leaders, Rockhurst High School launched at least three,

56. beginning with Dan Heryer in 2001. We can't claim credit for his equally committed spouse, Brooke Salvaggio.

I believe that Shawnee Mission East deserves great credit for her.

57. Since Dan's graduation, there have been two other environmental leaders that I know of, Phil Schapker and Tim Martin. All three have been recognized for their leadership, and beyond the walls of Rockhurst, exactly what we're looking for. We can claim to have taken at least three more steps toward a sustainable future.

58. I'm putting up one more slide to highlight recent environmental doings at Rockhurst. If you have any questions, please fire away.