

For Immediate Release
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Comsewogue Public Library is Certified Sustainable

The Sustainable Libraries Initiative recognizes the Comsewogue Public Library as a leader in sustainability.



Suffolk County, New York – January 13, 2022 – [Comsewogue Public Library](#) in Port Jefferson Station, New York, has been certified as a “Sustainable Library” through the [Sustainable Libraries Initiative’s](#) award-winning Sustainable Libraries Certification Program. This ground-breaking initiative guides libraries through a step-by-step process to infuse [triple bottom line](#) sustainable decision-making into their library’s policies and actions.

Through Comsewogue Public Library’s participation in the Sustainable Libraries Certification Program, they have strengthened their existing community partnerships and expanded into new collaborations. The library staff are keenly aware of the needs of their community, although not always able to directly meet them. Forging partnerships with other agencies allows Comsewogue Public Library to leverage this insight and align their services to involve partnering community organizations to ensure that their community’s current and emerging needs are met. The ability to bring agencies and resources together highlights Comsewogue Public Library’s prominent role in establishing and maintaining a thriving and resilient community.

The Sustainable Libraries Certification designation demonstrates to their community that decision making based on the triple bottom line principles can have lasting and tangible benefits. Comsewogue Director, Debbie Engelhardt, stated:

“Everything we do now is looked at differently. Purchases, procedures, policies are put through the Triple Bottom Line lens. We want to be Environmentally Sound, Socially Equitable and Economically Feasible in our decision making.”

As the library administration and staff worked through the rigorous benchmarking process, they reduced their greenhouse gas consumption through the installation of LED lighting fixtures, new HVAC units, a white roof, and an EnergyStar-rated water heater. Shredding and recycling events open to the community diverted 3720 gallons of paper and 1349 pounds of eWaste from the landfill. Energy and water savings information was broadcasted to the staff and community, with a representative from PSEG, the community’s energy provider, offering information and energy savings tips to library users. Additionally, they collaborated with the Town of Brookhaven to provide a receptacle for the community to continue to recycle glass after household pickup was discontinued.

To promote empathy and respect for all members of their diverse community, cultural competency training was offered to the staff and the library’s program offerings included several engaging programs that celebrate the variety of multi-cultural heritages of those they serve. The library set clear objectives in a new Collection Development Policy that sets out to promote literacy and inclusivity, encourage freedom of expression, and support their community’s interests. They have worked to expand their residents’ access to government services by hosting senior advocates, job fairs, and “Claim Your Unclaimed Funds” program. Reflecting on the certification program, Debbie Bush, Children’s & Teen Librarian, stated, “I believe our community better understands how we operate and sees our library as a sustainable leader in the community.”

International Impact

Comsewogue Public Library is among the first libraries to participate in the Sustainable Libraries Certification Program, the first of its kind in the world. This benchmarking program was developed to assist libraries of all kinds - public, academic, and individual school librarians - to create opportunities to make better choices on behalf of the local and global community.

The program has been recognized by the International Federation of Library Associations at their 2019 World Congress in Athens, Greece, becoming the first program in the United States to be honored through their “Green Libraries” Award.

Comprehensive Approach

With categories of actions focusing on each of the three pillars of triple bottom line sustainability such as Energy, Indoor Spaces, Social Cohesion, and Resilience Planning, this comprehensive process leads a library toward institutional change that shifts the rationale for every decision to consider the local and global impacts. Through this program, libraries work with their communities to listen and learn, allowing local needs to be identified and addressed. Strengthening the relationship between the library and the community they serve builds resilience through stronger connections with many organizations and increased access to information.

The path to certification through the Sustainable Libraries Certification Program is designed to be flexible for libraries of different types, sizes, and budgets and guided by the communities they serve. Each library that completes the program will select the benchmarks that best fit the needs of their library and community, resulting in a uniquely sustainable organization. Find out more information through our website (<https://sustainablelibrariesinitiative.org>) or contact sliadmin@suffolknet.org.

The Sustainable Libraries Initiative is expanding to enroll libraries throughout the United States, with nearly fifty libraries currently enrolled in the Sustainable Libraries Certification Program. Comsewogue Public Library is the ninth library to be certified through this program. Read more about Comsewogue Public Library's Certification on the [Sustainable Libraries Initiative's website news announcement](#).

For more information, please contact:

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