

# Green Living: Group helps nonprofits reduce waste, energy costs

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By Rachel DeFazio

Providing cost-free energy assessments for nonprofit groups and communities throughout the state, Waste Reduction Partners recently assisted several local organizations in reducing their waste and energy costs.

With headquarters in Asheville, WRP is comprised of retired scientists, engineers and other staff members who share their experience and resources with nonprofit groups, local governments and other organizations statewide. All WRP technical assistance is provided at no-cost to clients. Assessment projects are funded by government-sponsored grants, contracts and private contributions.

“We try to account for all of the energy (an organization) consumes before we even set foot on site,” said Les Hewlett, WRP energy surveyor. “Then, we look at the data to see if there are any problems with energy efficiency.”

Hewlett is currently working with two other engineers at the Cameron Art Museum in Wilmington to determine the building’s energy use and identify any related problems. The 40,000 square foot museum sits on a 9.3-acre woodland park known as Pyramid Park.

The New York City-based architecture firm, Gwathmey Siegel & Associates, designed the facility in 2002. Cameron Art Museum was previously named St. John’s Museum of Art and operated in downtown Wilmington from 1964 to 2001.

According to Deborah Velders, director of Cameron Art Museum, the two energy-related areas of focus are electricity and natural gas. This entailed the museum’s HVAC system, lighting, kitchen area, water heater and weather seals.

The WRP assessment team for the art museum was made up of Hewlett, Walter Johnston and Michael Heaney. They worked closely with Johnnie McKoy, the museum’s property manager, to find any problems with the facility’s electrical and natural gas systems and seek ways to reduce those energy costs, Velders said.

“We have implemented the low-level recommendations such as lighting and time settings for climate control in non-art areas,” Velders said. “But, the analysis of the major utility usage is not completed.”

Hewlett, Johnston and Heaney initiated their energy survey on April 23 and they completed a formal written report for the museum on Aug. 12. The three engineers have continued to work with the museum to assist in finding grants to address expenses.

Some of Cameron Art Museum's major expenses will include replacing existing or failing electrical or natural gas equipment with energy-efficient versions.

Hoffman Building Technologies and Johnson Controls are working with the WRP assessment team to fix or upgrade the museum's systems. Hoffman originally installed the system software, while Johnson maintains and monitors the mechanical system equipment.

"They hope to work with us to implement the suggestions and identify equipment and software issues that can be addressed – to the point of significantly reducing our utility bills," Velders said.

During the past 10 years, WRP volunteers have worked in different areas of the state to reduce solid waste by 177,677 tons and to conserve 601 million gallons of water.

According to the WRP website, the group has also helped in saving 146,116 megawatt hours as well as \$35 million in utility costs.

"This spirit of volunteerism and philanthropy is something to celebrate and cherish," Velders said.

"I know that we all feel very encouraged by their generosity and kindness. These gentlemen are highly trained and educated in their fields and we are all benefitting from their experience and expertise.