

## Meet Some Frederick County Green Leaders



**Denis and Brienne Superczynski** moved into their Thurmont home in 2005, excited to be in a location where their sons could walk and bike to school. They chose the house knowing that it would need some serious renovation to make it more comfortable and energy efficient. Now, six years later, the family is pleased to own an efficient home with personalized family gathering spaces. Despite a limited budget, the family created their dream home by focusing on the qualities that were most important to them and by saving money on salvaged materials and utility bills. They increased the usable space in the house by 50% without increasing its physical footprint or energy usage by 50%. The Superczynskis have proven to be model Green Leaders by making their home and lifestyles more environmentally-friendly.

You can choose to complete the Green Leader Challenge in whatever way best fits your household's lifestyle.

### Here's how the Superczynskis did it:

#### 1. Waste Management

- They compost kitchen and yard waste,
- Use biodegradable bags instead of plastic,
- Use cloth instead of disposable paper products,
- Recycle everything possible,
- Reduced their trash volume to one can every other week, and
- While remodeling their home, they recycled unwanted building materials, used salvaged materials, and installed renewable flooring materials, including natural linoleum, bamboo, and cork.



*Three hens provide the family with 2-3 fresh eggs each day.*

#### 2. Transportation

- They walk or ride bikes to school and the bus stop,
- Walk to town, the farmers market, and the park, and enjoy getting more exercise by doing so.

#### 3. Food

- They eat mostly vegetarian meals in order to save money, avoid processed and fried foods, and reduce the negative impacts of industrial meat production,
- House three hens that provide them with 2-3 eggs/day, bedding and waste for composting, and grass trimming,
- Built two raised beds for growing annual vegetables,
- Preserve extra produce by canning for use during the cold months,
- Purchase milk from a local creamery and buy produce and household goods from local farmers markets and The Common Market, and
- Create a meal plan each week in order to waste less food and have more family time.



*The Superczynskis grow vegetables in their raised bed garden.*

*"We've made conscious living choices to make sure that [we] have that time to just sit and talk and exchange what we've done during the day. We have the time and the space to be a family together, and that's important."*

*-Denis Superczynski*

#### 4. Indoors & Cleaning

- They avoid products containing bleach, fragrances, and additives,
- Make their own vegetable-based soaps,
- Use only low- or zero-VOC paint for walls and furniture,
- Used polyacrylic instead of polyurethane countertop treatment, and
- Use no carpeting for the sake of allergies, air quality, and non-recyclability.

#### 5. Indoor Water Conservation

- They installed low-flow water fixtures and dual-flush toilets,
- Purchased a high efficiency washing machine,
- Reduced laundry to 6-7 loads/week, and
- Only run the dishwasher when it's full.



*A pellet stove helps heat the family's home.*

#### 6. Yard & Outdoor Water Conservation

- They allow grass clippings to sit on their lawn,
- Remove invasive species and plant native plants in their yard,
- Purchased rain barrels, and
- Installed a rain garden that collects water from their roof and sump pump.

#### 7. Energy Efficiency & Conservation

- They have an energy efficient refrigerator and oven,
- Use all energy-efficient LED and CFL lighting,
- Use a pellet stove to heat the air and a solar radiant heat system to heat the floor and water, and
- Utilize passive heating and cooling by using window overhangs that block light in summer and allow heat in during the winter.

Creating a more sustainable household is an exciting and ongoing process. Benefits from the changes that the Superczynskis have made encourage them to think of even more practices that they can incorporate into their household. In the future, they want to focus on reducing the turf grass in their yard and utilizing their 1/3 acre to produce as much food as possible for the family.

Not only have the Superczynskis saved money on energy, food, transportation, building materials, and more, they also feel healthier and more united as a family because of the changes they made.



*Instead of using electricity, the Superczynskis heat their water with a solar water heater.*



*Brienne's homemade vegetable-based soaps are environmentally friendly and healthy for the family.*

*"We've really tried to watch what materials go into the house. Being vegetarian is a big piece of [being healthier too]. It's a busy family. It'd be really easy to run out to some fast food place, but we just don't eat that stuff. I think that sets the kids up. This is their foundation."*

*-Brienne Superczynski*