

in the green | local lawyer comes to defense of sustainability

BY LYNNE MEYER

It all started on the first Earth Day in 1970, when Carter Strang told his football coach that he wouldn't be at practice because he would be picking up garbage on campus. Ever since then, Strang has been a strong believer in good stewardship of the environment.

Flash forward to 2007 when Strang, now a law partner with Tucker Ellis and West, is browsing some articles in *Trial* magazine. He notices one that indicated that the American Bar Association (ABA), in association with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), had initiated a "Law Office Climate Challenge." He finds that the "challenge" includes three programs:

- **Waste Wise**, which involves reduction in office paper use and increased paper recycling
- **Energy Star**, which incorporates energy-management plans for law offices, with the target of a reduction in electricity use of at least 10 percent; and,
- **Green Power**, which encourages firms to purchase energy from renewable sources, such as wind power.

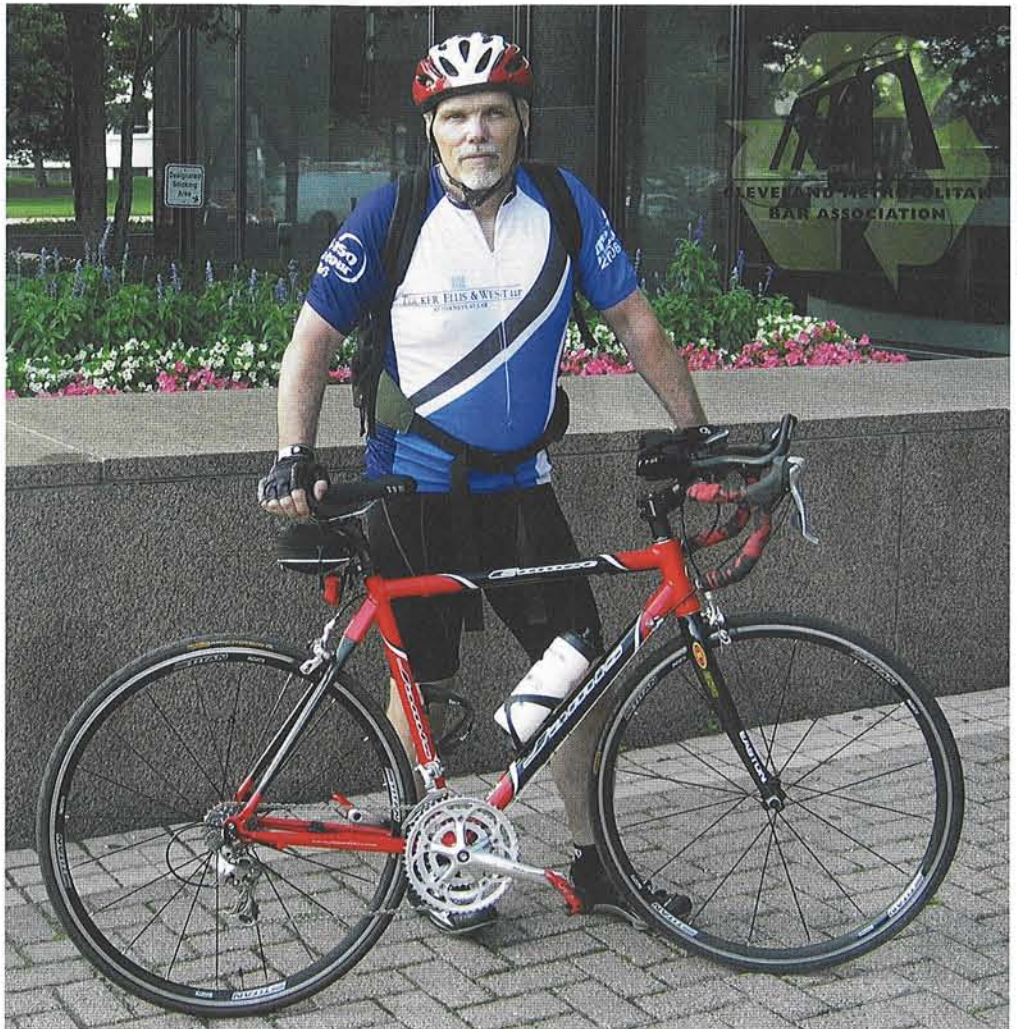
"I went to the ABA Web site and checked a list of law firms that the ABA had certified through the new program," Strang says. "No Cleveland or Northeast Ohio law firms were on the list. I asked myself, 'How can that be?'" It was then and there that he decided to do something about it.

According to Strang, law firms and offices generate a lot more paper than other businesses because of the need to file so many documents with the court. "On the civil litigation side, lawyers do a tremendous amount of work on a daily basis," he says, "and all of that takes a lot of paper."

LAWYERS AT FOREFRONT

Strang explains that lawyers have tended to be at the forefront of a lot of issues over the years. "Lawyers have a long, proud history in our community of being socially conscious and encouraging and enabling others to do the same," he says. "I felt that the time was right to add to that history by taking on a new challenge and doing more locally to be environmentally responsible in our daily practice of the law."

Strang immediately parlayed his personal passion for the environment to his profession as a lawyer. He spoke with Michael Britton, president-elect of the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar



Thanks in part to the efforts of Tucker Ellis and West attorney Carter Strang, who can often be found bicycling to work, 36 law firms and offices have achieved green certification from the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association.

Association (CMBA) about developing a green initiative that would fit this area. Britton liked the idea and made it a key initiative of his term. With the Board's blessing of the new initiative, Strang hit the phones to recruit lawyers to be on the CMBA Green Initiative Committee. The committee, which started with eight lawyers, became part of the CMBA's Environmental Law Section.

Strang points out that the committee decided it needed to modify some of the ABA's initiatives to fit the needs of local law firms and offices. As a result, in addition to the ABA's components, the committee added recycling bottles and cans as well as responsible handling of e-waste, which means disposing of used computers and copiers.

Photo provided by Tucker Ellis and West

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ACHIEVING GREEN CERTIFICATION

In addition to launching the concept of going green, the committee tackled the creation of CMBA's Green Certification Program. "We determined our criteria and developed a checklist. We then got the word out to law firms and offices, encouraging them to become certified," Strang says.

The Green Certification program is self-policing. Firms use the checklist as a guide and report what they're doing in each category. The first category of achieving less paper-waste use gives them options of how they're going to accomplish it. The next requirement is a pledge of 10 percent reduction in energy. Third is establishing a program to recycle glass, plastic, and e-waste products. The final requirement is that they have to establish their own internal Green Initiative Committee or designate an administrator to represent this effort.

In addition to launching the certification program, the committee wanted to stage a green event. They did so on Sept. 25, naming it the David Webster Greener Way to Work Day. David Webster was CMBA's president-elect, a Green Initiative Committee member, and a founder of the Clean Air Conservancy who had recently died.

The event was an invitation to members of the CMBA and residents of the Cleveland metropolitan area to find a greener way to work, such as mass transit, carpooling or biking.

To date, 36 law firms and offices have achieved the CMBA's green certification, according to Strang. He's pleased that Northeast Ohio law firms and offices are now fulfilling the ABA challenge he had read about. ■

For more information: www.clemetrobar.org/Committees/Green_Initiative/Green_Initiative_Committee



BLOG FROM THE BAR

Joe Koncelik started his blog – www.ohioenvironmentallawblog.com – in June of 2008. Koncelik heads the Environmental Practice section of Frantz Ward law firm, which specializes in environmental law. Prior to joining Frantz Ward, Koncelik had been Director of the Ohio EPA. "I felt that my background gave me a unique insight into state and national environmental regulation and policy," he says. "I was looking for an avenue to share my perspectives, developments, and hot issues. I use my blog to discuss hot topics and trends that I think will impact businesses going forward."

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