

Golden Isles

THE MAGAZINE FOR BRUNSWICK, ST. SIMONS, JEKYLL & SEA ISLANDS



Our Annual Celebration of Young Leaders

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Companies Show Health, Energy Efficiency Important Components to Running a Business

BY J.M. LACEY

An environmentally conscious individual does more than simply toss a plastic bottle in the recycle bin. He buys organic, reuses and recycles as much as environmentally possible, and leads by example. He's more than eco-conscious – his habits are a way of life.

In the business world, working green can often be a challenge. Offices are full of energy-extracting devices and habits such as computers and printers; employees devouring reams of paper by printing and copying; lights that are left on; air-conditioning and heating units sometimes running non-stop; and there is always someone who refuses to use the recycle bin.

Can businesses run an eco-friendly environment? What are the costs associated with energy efficiency? And are there benefits to working green?

"It's better for the planet if we use less power, less water," says Barbara Ingram, president of Paramount Printing, adding that "it's the responsible thing to do."

Barbara's employees recycle everything that can possibly be salvaged such as plastic, aluminum cans and cardboard. To them, she says, recycling is a habit. She strongly feels that once recycling becomes routine with anyone, the tendency is to continue recycling in one's own home.

Leading by example, Barbara drives a Prius Hybrid, her family grows their own vegetables, buys organic and local, uses compact fluorescent light bulbs, runs ceiling fans, and never buys water in plastic bottles. "The point is to be sustainable," she says. "Everything you do (has) a domino effect."



As the owner of a small commercial printer, Barbara is aware of the importance of energy savings. Although she had to adhere to strict historic preservation guidelines when she restored the now 100-year-old building that houses her business, she made certain the shop would run energy efficient without taking away from the authenticity of the structure. The building is equipped with energy saving materials such as a flat roof with a waterproofing system that reflects light and heat; programmable thermostat; and energy efficient air-conditioning units. She also installed Low-Emissivity window glass, which controls the amount of heat transfer and infrared radiation. Low-E windows typically cost 10 to 15 percent more than regular windows but reduce energy loss by 30 to 50 percent.

Despite running eight large pieces of printing, bindery and copying equipment and six computers in a building with 13-foot high ceilings and western-facing windows, Barbara's electric bill is equal to that of most homes.

Great news for her business, considering Buildings Energy Data Book reports that residential and commercial buildings consume over 70 percent of electricity in the United States. This accounts for 80 percent, \$238 billion, of the total U.S. electricity expenditures.

John A. Tuten and Associates, Architects earned a gold rating for the LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified office building they completed in 2008. LEED accreditation is awarded to individuals, specifically architects and others who work within the building industries who have been trained in a variety of sustainable and environmentally responsible

building curriculum, explains Brock Toba- den, architectural intern with Tuten and Associates. The firm has three LEED accredited architectural professionals.

The gold rating they received was awarded using a point system in areas such as water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality.

Their office building is the only building in Glynn County with the LEED gold certification.

President and Architect John A. Tuten explained that the essence of their building is the natural light. This would include an efficient reflective metal roof surface with the highest reflectivity to reduce solar heat gain. The orientation of the building, combined with the design and placement of the roof overhangs and windows keep the building free of glare. They installed a reflective white limestone gravel surface in their parking lot instead of using heat absorbing asphalt.

When there is no natural sunlight, their sophisticated lighting system kicks in. All of the lights are activated with sensors that sense motion and patterns of use. They come on only when needed.

Nearly everything in their building is produced with recycled material including the carpet, the recycled glass kitchen counters and rubber parking bumpers.

The facility is equipped with a sunken pond loop heat exchanger. This device uses the consistent temperatures at the bottom of the 13-foot pond to provide a natural air-conditioning and heating system.

“Building an energy efficient building isn’t the least expensive you can do,” says John. He was convinced, however, that you do not have to spend a lot of money for such a structure and used his own design as an example.

At their cost of \$106 a square foot, the 6,000 square foot building operates at 56 percent of energy usage of a typical office building. They save nearly \$5,000 in electricity annually. The savings earned them a 2009 ENERGY STAR Certification.

Although John’s firm does not design all of their buildings with the LEED qualifications, they try to apply as many of the lessons



they’ve learned and researched as they can, to the extent the budget will allow. For now, John says their building is “the only building with daylight at this level of sophistication,” in this area.

The products we use in our homes and offices can also adversely affect our physical health. The Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Research and Development’s “Total Exposure Assessment Methodology (TEAM) Study” found levels of about a dozen common organic pollutants to be two to five times higher inside homes than outside. These include paints and varnishes, cleaning supplies, and hobby and cosmetic products. Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)—gasses emitted from certain solids or liquids—are up to ten times higher indoors than outdoors. VOCs are found in paints and lacquers; cleaning supplies; furniture and building materials; and office equipment such as copiers and printers, graphics and craft materials including glues and adhesives, permanent markers and photographic solutions.

Anne Dyer, proprietor of Island Scene, and an independent distributor of and global

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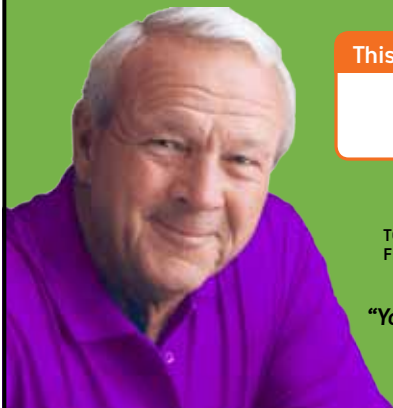
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ambassador for Shaklee®, a natural nutrition company based in the U.S., educates others on using environmentally safe products for the home and workplace.

"Anybody can put 'green' on their label," says Anne. But what distinguishes environmentally safe green products from ones harmful to you, your family or pets, are the warning symbols. Products that tell you to use gloves, labeled danger, warning, caution or poison, are not products you want in your home or your business, she warns.

Anne also says ingredients like ammonia, chlorine and formaldehyde are highly toxic, causing all kinds of skin irritations and even liver, lung and kidney damage.

To find out what's really inside the bottle, check the labels or contact the manufacturer and ask for the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS), she suggests. Web sites such as Green Seal (greenseal.org), Environmental Working Group (ewg.org) and Household Products Database (householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov/ingredients.htm) can provide additional information on your products.

Products that are all natural are organic, made with plants. Also, Anne suggests using products that are super concentrated, which will last longer and save you money.

Anne stresses the importance of businesses using environmentally friendly products to provide a safe place for their employees to work.

"Their employees are healthier, they miss fewer days of work, there are fewer accidents and they are generally happier," she says. "As people are more environmentally conscious...then they are actually helping people as well as the environment to have better health."

Barbara agrees that her employees at Paramount Printing are much healthier and happier. An air filtration system designed to eliminate the printing fumes means the air they breathe is cleaner.

"If (our employees) are happier and healthier, they are more productive," she says. "I

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Run for the Kids

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want this to be a happy place to work so they'll stay." She adds that keeping in mind the health of the ones who work for you is the right thing to do.

The fresh air standards at Tuten and Associates are the highest in the industry, says John. There are minimum standards and then there are the LEED standards they follow. "This building was extraordinarily clean before we turned the heating and air conditioning system on," he says. They changed the filter after 90 days of running the system and the filter still looked brand new.

Their walk-off mats placed at each entrance use a recycled rubber grate system which "essentially knocks the dust and dirt off your feet so you won't bring it inside and hurt your indoor air quality," says Brock.

For John and his associates, their facility is a better environment to work in and because of this, "it's a very pleasant place to be every day," he states.

John wanted to demonstrate that a LEED building can be designed and built at a reasonable cost, and that it is a practical thing to do. A safe, energy efficient environment can be created by following "common sense guidelines." He attempts to influence his clients, including school clients, to think in this direction.

"Our energy resources are limited and common sense is we've got to change it," he adds. "We need to think differently about how we build buildings." ©

J.M. Lacey (jmlacey.com) is a professional freelance writer. She writes articles on business, social development, the arts, health, fashion and Victorian homes.



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