

cover story

Expo offers a one-stop shop for ideas, education

By DICK CONKLIN
Keys Sunday Contributor

The Green Living and Energy Education (GLEE) Expo on Saturday, March 31, is one-stop shopping, a perfect opportunity to get up to speed on a variety of earth-friendly topics, and to see what "green" vendors have to offer Keys residents and businesses.

GLEE 2007 is a free two-day event offering practical solutions on important topics such as water and energy conservation, renewable energy, green boating, and green lodging. What you learn there can help you lead a healthier lifestyle, reduce business costs, improve your community and save energy, water and the earth.

The Saturday, March 31, session at Marathon's Switlik Elementary School has something for everyone — consumers, businesses and the building trades. Thirty-four workshops will feature regional and national experts on a broad range of environmental topics. More than 50 exhibitors and distributors of green products and services will showcase things like solar water heaters, alternative building materials and energy- and water-saving devices. Fifteen hybrid, electric and bioenergy-fueled cars will be on display.

On Sunday, April 1, a green house tour will showcase homes of the future, featuring new models using renewable energy and built from alternative building materials, and renovated homes that have been upgraded into examples of energy- and water-efficiency.

The following are 10 green ideas for the Keys: Things that can be done today to protect our environment and save money. How many of these can you relate to?

All of these topics — and more — will be addressed at the GLEE Expo.

Boating

Boats are a big source of hazardous wastes, including solvents, paints, used batteries, mercury in bilge pump switches, used oil, and spilled gasoline. These materials not only harm the environment, but they hamper the enjoyment of recreational areas. "Keys-Friendly" boating practices, cleaning products, propulsion systems, sewage disposal, fuel control, and hurricane preparation can make a big difference.

A GLEE workshop by Ed Russell Jr. will address clean boating, marinas and boatyards, including improving water quality, and managing hazardous and solid wastes.

Green lodging

Green Lodges are earth-friendly inns, eco-lodges, eco-hotels, and eco-resorts, known for conserving natural resources, reducing waste, and minimizing pollution. A special workshop for hotel, motel and resort owners and managers will be presented, and free one-on-one consultations are also available. Learn how to make your hotel more energy-efficient, water-wise and attractive to tourists.

The Florida Green Lodging Certification Program is a voluntary, non-regulatory effort by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to encourage the lodging industry to conserve and protect Florida's natural resources. Karen Moore from the DEP will be on hand to explain the program. www.FloridaGreenLodging.org.

Energy conservation

The wise use of electricity can lower your consumption and save you money. Florida Keys Electric Cooperative (Upper and Middle Keys) and Keys Energy Services (Lower Keys) both offer free programs to evaluate your home and show you what can be done. FKEC's T.J. Patterson will be at GLEE to describe their services.

Since air conditioning represents such a large portion of Keys power usage, a variety of cost and energy-saving ideas will be discussed, such as programmable thermostats, air conditioner filters, the correct use of ceiling fans, high-efficiency AC units, and the sealing and insulating of air-conditioning ducts. Other topics include home shading, including the use of outside vegetation, curtains, blinds, trellises, and awnings.

The Power Pause program was developed by FKEC to reduce high demand periods and maintain low rates by regulating power usage from air conditioners, pool pumps and water heaters during peak periods. Savings are passed

If you go

- ◆ What: Green Living and Energy Education (GLEE) Expo
- ◆ Where: Stanley Switlik School, Marathon
- ◆ When: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, March 31 (Expo); 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, April 1 (tours)
- ◆ Cost: Free
- ◆ For more info: (305) 293-7658 or www.keysglee.com



Photo by DICK CONKLIN

Florida Keys Electric Coops' Power Pause program is an energy load-leveling technology that helps reduce power usage during peak periods, by regulating air conditioning units, pool pumps and water heaters. This unit monitors power consumption and regulates devices as needed. Savings are passed along to consumers.

along to customers.

This month the Energy Film Festival in Key West featured several recent films on energy-saving topics. Twenty films were showcased from March 16 to 22.

Water conservation

Another precious (and costly) resource is potable water in the Florida Keys. By reducing the demand for water, we can help protect our ecosystem and save money. GLEE workshops will describe efficient water use practices and show how water-saving devices and appliances can help.

Just in time for the rainy season, GLEE's free rainwater workshops will show you how to create your own rainwater storage system. The free, two-hour workshop teaches you about landscaping in the Keys, and gives do-it-yourself tips on how to get the most from your roof.

Jane Tallman from the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority will conduct a GLEE workshop on how to "Cut Your Water Bill Today."



Photo by DIANE MARSHALL

Sue Beal of Key Largo loads old computer hardware into her car. She went to a community yard sale at closing time and convinced the sellers to give her their old electronics rather than throw them into a landfill. They will be taken to the electronics recycling booth at the GLEE Expo and processed by RecycledPCParts.com.

Recycling

Three words — reduce, reuse, and recycle — sum up the ongoing effort to reduce waste by reusing products, avoiding disposables, and recycling whenever possible.

Electronics and appliances are the fastest growing segment of trash today. The EPA predicts that in the next five years, approximately 250 million computers will become obsolete. Cell phones are being discarded at the rate of 130 million per year. That's about 65 million tons of waste! At this year's GLEE, a free electronics recycling center will be set up for attendees. In addition, FKEC is giving out 1,000 recycling bins at the event.

The recycling service is provided courtesy of RecycledPCParts.com, Inc., which offers electronic equipment recycling of computers, TVs, and networking, telecommunications, cellular and document creation and management equipment. All material is processed to the fullest extent possible, with strict regard for environmental protection and regulatory compliance. Discarded equipment is transformed into functional products and salable materials.

Building

The adoption of sustainable development principles can also go a long way to preserving and protecting the environment. For example, carbon emissions can be "offset" by neutralizing, balancing, or canceling them out. Offsets can be created by increasing energy efficiency in buildings, generating electricity from renewables such as wind or solar energy, modifying a power plant or factory to use

fuels that produce fewer emissions, putting wasted energy to work via cogeneration, and capturing carbon dioxide through vegetation.

Dr. Jennifer Languell of Trifecta Construction will talk about healthy, efficient and sustainable projects including single-family residential construction, land development, commercial and multifamily residential construction, and Green Building education/demonstration centers. She conducts over 100 annual workshops for the building and development industry. www.trifectaconstruction.com.

Eco-Smart's Matthew Ross will also talk about energy and resource-efficient building materials and sustainable construction features.

Transportation

Energy used for transportation can be reduced by promoting alternative modes of transportation, encouraging good driving habits, improving vehicle energy efficiency, offering financial incentives for green vehicles, and supporting the smart, clean, and economically efficient use of biodiesel, ethanol, fuel-cell, and hybrid vehicles.

Green transportation reduces vehicle emissions, increases overall transportation system efficiency, improves health through exercise, saves money, and reduces our national dependence on foreign oil. According to federal statistics, a car that gets 30 mpg saves \$550 per year over a car that gets only 20 mpg, based on driving the annual average of 15,000 miles a year, at a fuel cost of \$2.20 per gallon. Some hybrid models get from 50 to 70 mpg. Energy-efficient cars will be on display at GLEE.



Contributed photo

The home of Bob Williams, founder of Sea Air Land Technologies (SALT), will be featured on Sunday Green House Tour.

seasonal rains, salt water intrusion and hot summers. But by using the right mix of plants, fertilizers, irrigation and mulch, you can grow a beautifully landscaped yard, that also protects our wildlife, forests and water quality.

"Keys-Friendly" landscaping, fertilizing, irrigation and mulching is promoted through the GreenThumb Certified program. The GreenThumb program certifies local nurseries in "Keys-Friendly" gardening practices: hurricane-resistant plants, slow release fertilizers, eco-friendly mulch and pest management. Visit www.KeysGreenThumb.net

Healthy, green homes

On Sunday, GLEE attendees can see for themselves the future of home building, right here in the Keys. Tours of houses from Key Largo to No Name Key will demonstrate



Photo by DICK CONKLIN

Using native plants reduces the need to water your landscape.

renewable energy, the use of alternative building materials, and houses that have been renovated to be energy- and water-efficient.

One of these is the Marathon home of Bob Williams, founder of Sea Air Land Technologies (SALT), which has been featured in a previous Keys Sunday issue. Williams' workshop will cover alternative energy applications for land and marine environments, including desalination, modular chillers, PV powered ice making, and PV powered eutectic refrigeration. His home is passively cooled and solar powered.

Four of the homes are on No Name Key, an island where living without electricity is the norm, not the exception.

The 2005 GLEE Expo demonstrated how much our community wanted to see green practices in action. The home tour attracted a large group of people who tried to visit most of the homes.

This year, one-hour time slots, starting at 10 a.m. and ending at 4 p.m., allow groups of no more than 10 people at a time to view the homes, providing an unharmed experience for both homeowners and guests. Volunteers will be provided as sentries in front of each home, to offer directions and other information.

"I am hoping that people will realize that you really can live with our environment, and banish the myth that this 'alternative lifestyle' is a bit weird. Actually it is quite normal, and easy," said Alison Higgins, who is organizing the tours. "You don't have to give up creature comforts in order to use cistern water and solar energy. It really makes sense."

Home tour sign-ups will take place on Saturday during the GLEE Expo sessions at Switlik school. The six scheduled time slots are (1) 10-11 a.m. (2) 11 a.m.-noon (3) noon-1 p.m. (4) 1-2 p.m. (5) 2-3 p.m. and (6) 3-4 p.m. Maps will be provided and green features will be spotlighted for each home on the tour.

For more information on the home tours, e-mail Alison Higgins at ahiggins@tnc.org or call her at 305-923-1783.