

## **Seminar focuses on 'greening' of new homes Environmentally friendly event in San Francisco draws thousands**

Paul Kilduff, Special to The Chronicle  
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It used to be that March 17 -- St. Patrick's Day -- was the only day of the year to be "green." Not so anymore. Now you can be green all year long. It's downright fashionable to be kind to Mother Earth.

Last weekend, 8,000 would-be and certified "greenies" packed the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium in downtown San Francisco for the inaugural West Coast Green -- part home-improvement trade show, part "green" educational seminar -- in search of ways to both save the planet and upgrade their abodes so that Al Gore himself would approve.

Of the more than 200 exhibitors, at least 10 were companies selling plans to help Gov. Schwarzenegger achieve his "million solar roofs" plan for the state.

But even if you were not in the market for a pricey solar makeover, the trade show floor offered plenty of low-cost products that save both money and resources, such as compact fluorescent lamps that last 10 times as long as conventional incandescent bulbs.

Bulbmaker Sylvania was giving away 30-watt fluorescent bulbs that give off as much light as the 100-watt incandescent versions, but you had to sign a pledge that you'd actually use it to get one.

In keeping with the somewhat strident "green" atmosphere, there were also self-styled "composting Nazis" positioned at all the garbage cans to sift through the debris to make sure it went into the appropriate bin (compostable, recyclable or just plain trash).

Even the utensils and cups given out by the concessionaires selling items like the delectable soy corn dog (\$4) were made from compostable corn starch. As Rachael Ray, of the Food Network, might say, "Yummo."

Perhaps the most impressive of the inexpensive quick fixes is a contraption called the Aqus. About the size of a bread box, the Aqus collects water from your bathroom sink in a box inside the vanity, filters it and sends it to your toilet tank through a plastic hose, where it's used for flushing.

According to Aqus inventor Mark Sanders, the device can save 5,000 to 6,000 gallons of water a year. The Aqus retails for \$195 and can be installed by anyone handy enough to put in a toilet.

A CPA from Owensboro, Ky., Sanders, 47, first became obsessed with the amount of bathroom sink water wasted when people run the tap to get it warm -- something he does because he has sensitive teeth and brushes with warm water. "That's clean, drinkable water -- you ought to use that for the toilet," said Sanders, as convincingly as any infomercial pitchman.

For those in the market for green improvements you can actually see, a hot product at the show was PaperStone. It's made from recycled newspaper, cardboard and other paper waste, and if you didn't know any better you'd swear PaperStone was wood, granite, concrete or whatever else they want to make it look like. And if it reminds you of being at a Starbucks, that's understandable; it's used extensively there as well.

Essentially layers and layers of paper compressed at 45,000 pounds per square inch, PaperStone is as hard as any household surface you can imagine. It's so durable that Russ Leverenz of PaperStone-maker North Star Surfaces challenges anyone to take a hammer to it. "All you'll get is calluses," Leverenz said.

A "green" product that's been around since the 1850s but has been rediscovered by homeowners only in the past 10 years or so is linoleum. So named because linseed oil is used to make it, linoleum began life as canvas covered in the oil for a ship's sails. The only problem was that the linseed oil made the canvas too stiff to work as a sail, so it was marketed instead for ship decking. This led to its use on home floors, and everything was hunky dory for Forbo, the original linoleum-maker, which markets the product under the trade name Marmoleum. However, in the 1950s vinyl flooring products such as Congoleum came into

vogue.

Aside from supposedly saving the planet by not covering your floor with a petroleum product such as vinyl, linoleum is also anti-static, so it doesn't attract dirt, and anti-microbial, so germs don't want to live in it.

Linoleum also cleans up with a broom and a damp mop -- no harsh floor cleaners or waxes are needed. And, because it hardens over time, it can last 40 years. Vinyl floors are good for about 12. Marmoleum's "click" system of boards can be easily self-installed on top of an existing floor for as little as \$5 a square foot.

A part of your home that you never see, but really appreciate when it's cold or hot, is insulation, something Californians install 20 million feet of annually.

Conventional insulation is made with fiberglass that, as anyone who's ever touched the stuff can attest, contains little bits of glass. To work with it you have to wear gloves. Now there are two alternatives to the scratchy yellow stuff, made from wool and cotton. Called Latitude and UltraTouch, respectively, both can be installed without gloves and have superior sound-deadening qualities. Unlike fiberglass insulation, natural fibers also breathe and resist mold and bugs.

UltraTouch's makers say its product is about 25 percent more expensive than fiberglass. Latitude's makers say using the product increases the cost of insulating a 2,500-square-foot house by about \$1,000.

Just how did West Coast Green conventioners fare when confronted by the dizzying array of "green" household solutions? For one couple, Esa Micallef and Gary Weinreb of Charlotte, N.C., the event caused them to make that blind leap of faith into the world of marital bliss -- something they accomplished during a spare moment at nearby San Francisco City Hall.

Micallef, 50, an interior designer, and Weinreb, 47, a techie and entrepreneur, had been engaged and were at the convention in part to investigate items to carry at the environmentally friendly home-products store they plan to open in Charlotte called Tzallgoods (pronounced "It's all goods").

"We feel like our union is part of something bigger," Weinreb said. "So we wanted to sanctify that with something we truly believe in." Weinreb said the primary thing he'll take away from the show (aside from a bride) is "how green values are trickling down to the consumer level. That's really powerful."

#### Resources

- Aquas: [www.WaterSaverTech.com](http://www.WaterSaverTech.com)
- PaperStone: [www.nssurfaces.com](http://www.nssurfaces.com)
- Marmoleum: [www.forboflooringNA.com](http://www.forboflooringNA.com)
- Latitude natural wool insulation: [www.latitudeinsulation.com](http://www.latitudeinsulation.com)
- UltraTouch Natural Cotton Fiber Insulation: [www.bondedlogic.com](http://www.bondedlogic.com)

#### Green resources

Following is a list of some of the services and other resources featured in San Francisco.

##### Services

Build It Green: Berkeley: Provides a directory of green products and suppliers, referrals to green builders, green building guidelines, calendar of events, fact sheets and technical information; (888) 404-7336, [www.BuildItGreen.org](http://www.BuildItGreen.org).

Cool Roof Rating Council: Oakland: Rates roofing products on how they help keep a house or building cool, (866) 465-2523, [www.coolroofs.org](http://www.coolroofs.org).

Green Building Studio: Santa Rosa: Evaluates architects' designs for energy efficiency, (707) 569-7373, [www.greenbuildingstudio.com](http://www.greenbuildingstudio.com).

GreenPoint Rated: A program of Build It Green, evaluates homes for energy efficiency, resource and water conservation, indoor air quality and community, (510) 845-0472 or (888) 404-7336, [www.greenpointrated.org](http://www.greenpointrated.org).

GreenSage: San Francisco: Lists products and experts and provides training, (415) 453-7915, [www.greensage.com](http://www.greensage.com).

Marin County Green Building Program: Offers technical assistance, training for professionals, presentations, a library at the Marin Civic Center and design guidelines, (415) 507-2659, [www.marinsustainability.org](http://www.marinsustainability.org).

Pacific Energy Center: Pacific Gas & Electric Co., 851 Howard St., San Francisco, (415) 973-2277, [www.pge.com/pec](http://www.pge.com/pec).

San Francisco Biofuels Cooperative: Promotes and provides renewable biodiesel, (415) 267-3998, [www.sfbiofuels.org](http://www.sfbiofuels.org).

Sustainable Energy Partners LLC San Francisco: Works with companies to plan and implement clean technology; (415) 793-5869, [www.SEPartners.com](http://www.SEPartners.com).

Sustainable Spaces Inc., San Francisco: Works with homeowners and builders to recommend green home improvement measures, (415) 294-5380 or (800) 645-1675, [www.sustainablespace.com](http://www.sustainablespace.com).

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9, San Francisco: Lists green building Web sites, (415) 972-3282, [www.epa.gov/greenbuilding](http://www.epa.gov/greenbuilding).

#### Stores

Branch, San Francisco, online only, (415) 341-1824, [www.branchhome.com](http://www.branchhome.com).

Eco Design Resources, 633 Quarry Road, Suite A, San Carlos, (650) 591-1123; 1014 Cedar St., Santa Cruz, (831) 421-0588, [www.ecodesignresources.com](http://www.ecodesignresources.com).

EcoHome Improvement, 2619 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, (510) 644-3500, [www.ecohomeimprovement.com](http://www.ecohomeimprovement.com).

Eco-terric, 1401 16th St., second floor, San Francisco, (415) 558-8700, [www.eco-terric.com](http://www.eco-terric.com).

#### Directories

The Beam, home professionals, online starting in November, [www.thebeam.com](http://www.thebeam.com).

Builders' Guide to Reuse & Recycling, Alameda County, (510) 614-1699, [www.buildgreennow.org](http://www.buildgreennow.org).

Builder's Guide to Reuse & Recycling, Contra Costa County, (925) 906-1801, [www.wastediversion.org](http://www.wastediversion.org).

CalFinder, Bay Area contractors, (866) 622-5346, [www.calfinder.com](http://www.calfinder.com).

Green Building Pages, (805) 782-9431, [www.greenbuildingpages.com](http://www.greenbuildingpages.com).

GreenSpec Directory, (800) 861-0954, Ext. 191, [www.buildinggreen.com](http://www.buildinggreen.com).

Solar Energy Resource Guide, (530) 852-0354, [www.norcal solar.org](http://www.norcal solar.org).

Solar Living, workshops, (707) 744-2017, [www.solarliving.org](http://www.solarliving.org).

#### Magazines

Ecological Home Ideas, (815) 734-5958, [www.ecologicalhomeideas.com](http://www.ecologicalhomeideas.com).

Fine Homebuilding, (203) 426-8171, [www.finehomebuilding.com](http://www.finehomebuilding.com).

Green Builder Magazine, (877) 847-3368, [www.greenbuildermag.com](http://www.greenbuildermag.com).

Home Energy, (510) 524-5405, [www.homeenergy.org](http://www.homeenergy.org).

Home Power, (800) 707-6585, [www.homepower.com](http://www.homepower.com).

Natural Pages, East Bay, North Bay, San Francisco, South Bay/Peninsula editions, (800) 486-4794, [www.naturalpages.com/ba.html](http://www.naturalpages.com/ba.html).

Plenty, (800) 316-9006, [www.plentymag.com](http://www.plentymag.com).

Smart HomeOwner, (207) 772-2466, [www.smarthomeownermag.com](http://www.smarthomeownermag.com).

Sustainable Industries Journal, (503) 226-7798, [www.sjournal.com](http://www.sjournal.com).

Today's Home, San Francisco/San Mateo, East Bay/680 corridor, South Bay/Peninsula, North Bay/Marin/Napa/Sonoma, East Shore/880 corridor editions, (888) 274-1140, [www.todayshomemagazine.com](http://www.todayshomemagazine.com).

The Velvet Crowbar, (888) 588-9490, [www.thereusepeople.org](http://www.thereusepeople.org).

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