

Read It Here

news culture outdoors



Sustainable business:
Doing well by doing good.

No. 3

February 2007



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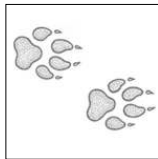
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On the cover: Wind electrical generators in Prescott Valley. Photo by Jason Bordonaro.

Heard Around the West

By Betsy Marston

UTAH

Since 1991, Salt Lake City's basketball arena has been called the Delta Center, named for the now-bankrupt Delta Air Lines. But in November, Delta lost a naming battle for the arena to EnergySolutions, an amalgam of companies that includes Envirocare of Utah. Envirocare runs a nuclear waste dump on public land and is probably looking to clean up its image, reports the New York Times, especially since its founder, Khosrow Semnani, pleaded guilty to charges of tax evasion. Image-polishing won't happen overnight. One Utah Jazz basketball fan said she'd already heard the arena called everything from the "Tox Box" and "Radium Stadium" to "Half-Life Arena" and "HazMat Center." Another disgusted basketball fan said, "Utah's always been the 'stick-it' state; whatever you don't want in your state, stick it here. We're not tree-huggers, but these guys lend credence to bringing all this stuff to Utah."

CALIFORNIA

A new breed of young singles is evolving in big cities, and they're sniffily demanding about things environmental. That's because they're "ecossexuals," reports San Francisco magazine, with green standards for everything from clothes and cars to potential mates. "I won't date a guy who doesn't recycle," insists San Francisco designer Rachel Pearson, 33. Another woman says: "I can tell instantly if he's my type by the deodorant he uses." Food preferences quickly separate the greens from the ones who don't get it. "I shopped at Rainbow; she shopped at Safeway," recalls Monte Gores, a Berkeley acupuncturist who was once a stock trader. After his girlfriend told him she'd eaten half a chocolate cake for dinner, he was on the way to ditching her: "If you're thinking about a long-term relationship," he concluded, "that's a red flag."

Passion may still triumph over ideology, writer Stefanie Olsen observed. A landscape construction worker had been scrupulously green and even celibate for a year and a half, until he met a woman "who corrupted me with her wonderful ways," which included wine, sex and the occasional burger.

CALIFORNIA (& CONNECTICUT)

A Squaw Valley, Calif., ski instructor with mechanical moxie and a \$950 rope tow has created a backyard ski area. The Vail Daily says Ken Wittel's rope tow is powered by a 5 horsepower gas engine that can pull skiers up Wittel's 300-foot-high hill at 11 to 18 mph. If your backyard lacks the white stuff, don't despair: The Connecticut company Snow at Home sells mini-snowmaking machines for less than \$500, reports Hemispheres, the magazine of United Airlines.

CALIFORNIA (& MEXICO)

It sounds like a joke, but it's not: The company hired to build a huge fence to block illegal immigrants from crossing into America from Mexico has agreed to pay nearly \$5 million in fines for hiring illegal immigrants to do the job, reports The Week magazine. A recent investigation found that of Golden State Fence Co.'s 750 employees, about a third were in this country illegally.

THE WEST

Thanks to a cell phone, a 75-year-old Oregon veteran was reunited with his "prescription dog" after the man's car — with the dog inside — was stolen from a gas station in Nebraska. Bliss Green had been given a written prescription for a dog by a nurse practitioner, who hoped a pet might ease his suicidal depression. The remedy was unorthodox, but it worked. Green said, "If

(the dog) was with me and knew I was upset about something, her head would come on my lap. I haven't been depressed since I got her." Because the car thief used Green's cell phone, police were able to track his vehicle through Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho and, finally, Oregon, where a suspect was arrested. Meanwhile, the dog, Melody, had been abandoned in Wyoming, where a couple found her huddled under their pickup. After a week with the couple, the dog's next home was an animal shelter, where authorities were able to connect Melody to the stolen car. Green was thrilled to hear Melody was safe, saying of their upcoming reunion: "I'm worried, but I have no reason to believe it won't be perfect. This is just like a person-to-person relationship. I'll handle it gently."

What a difference a letter makes. A 21-year-old German booked a ticket for Sydney, Australia. Or so he thought, until his plane landed in Billings on the way to Sidney, Mont., population 5,000 and considerably colder than the antipodean port city. Tobi Gutt, wearing clothes fit for an Australian summer, was routed from Portland, Ore., to the oil town of Sidney, only learning of his error when his plane landed in Billings. "I did wonder, but I didn't want to say anything," he told the German paper Bild. "I thought to myself, you can fly to Australia via the United States." Gutt hung around the Billings airport for three days before his family and friends sent him the money for a new ticket for Sydney, Australia.

(Betsy Marston is editor of Writers on the Range, a service of High Country News in Paonia, Colorado (betsym@hcn.org). Tips of Western oddities are always appreciated and often shared in the column, Heard around the West.)



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Doing well by doing good: *sustainable businesses make inroads in the quad cities.*

By Erica Ryberg

If Prescott Valley decides that adding a Wal-Mart to their town is a good idea, there may be a silver lining. Or rather, a green one.

In a recent interview with journalist William Rice, Wal-Mart's media relations go-between Steven Restivo said, "Our environmental goals at Wal-Mart are simple and straightforward: To be supplied 100 percent

billion dollars worth of environmentally friendly products by 2010.

With that in mind, we decided to take a look at what businesses closer to home are doing in the way of sustainability. The results were mixed, but amid the blank stares and red herrings, I did find a few great examples of profitable sustainability.

I talked to two companies here in

company with a corporate culture of protecting the environment and increasing efficiency. Exsil practices a successful business model, stating that it's cheaper and nearly as effective to recover used silicon wafers as to make new ones.

Green chamber

These are the only two local businesses I encountered in my quest for green businesses that aren't members of a local green chamber of commerce, the Green to Gold network. Entrepreneurs Jan Bryan and Mary Lin launched Green to Gold in 2005, and right now it has around 25 members (compared to the Prescott Chamber of Commerce's roster of 1,400).

Like a typical chamber, Bryan says, Green to Gold members want to engage in dialog at the community level.

"We represent a pretty sizable chunk of this local economy—we are successful business owners who ascribe to sustainability values and ideas and guidelines," said Bryan, a financial planner who specializes in social investing. "If indeed resources are limited and future business profitability is linked to sustainability, we think it's a good thing to dialog with the City."

It's not hard when the City, or at least one council member, is already a member. Bob Luzius said he joined in order to educate himself and to be a liaison to a city government with a great record for encouraging business—and a blank stare where sustainability is concerned.

Green energy

At a slightly higher level in government, though, things pick up.

Prescott's District 1 representative Lucy Mason helped give renewable energy a big shot in the arm by writing a bill that gave consumer rebates on solar purchases.

"With all the sun and wind we have, Arizona needs to be a leader in developing sustainable energy," she said.

That bill and the increasing tendency for people to buy affordable land "off the grid" have kept Ben Mancini's business, EV Solar, hopping.

"There's enough sunlight that strikes the planet to power the entire planet for a year," said Mancini. "It's just a question if you have the technology to convert it."

Or the money. Right now, a solar sys-



A geometric array of solar panels is part of the APS solar plant next to the Prescott Airport. They're pretty to look at, but the technology still has a long way to go before it's able to meet the Arizona Corporation Commission's 2015 renewable energy requirements. RIH photo/Erica Ryberg

by renewable energy; to create zero waste; and to sell products that sustain our resources and our environment."

Huh?

Wal-Mart is the company so many love to hate, or at least that we hate to shop, but lately it's doing its best to lead what is amounting to a substantial wave of interest in sustainable business practices. It's doing this not only by adding solar panels and skylights to some of its stores but by putting organic produce in its food aisles—at the low prices that personify (and sometimes vilify) the Wal-Mart way of doing business.

It's not just Wal-Mart, either. DuPont is looking into nicer chemicals and GE has launched "ecomagination," a program that vows to significantly reduce GE's green house gas emissions and sell \$20

Prescott that have worked on decreasing their water and power usage, The Top Shop and Exsil. In both cases, the businesses are motivated less by idealism and more by their bottom lines. For example, the Top Shop's Tod Makela and his wife, Theresa Ebarb-Makela, installed a power conditioning system (courtesy of Western Watt, Inc.) in the hopes of lowering the Top Shop's substantial electricity bill. They also use water recycling systems to filter and recycle the flood of water their machines require to cut the granite counter tops that make up about half their business.

On a larger but still local scale, the folks at Exsil, a silicon-wafer recovery operation, have increased their hydro-efficiency seven-fold over the last seven years. Far from being a hummus-lovin' hippy co-op, Exsil is a high-tech recycling