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Home show promotes saving environment, money

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The trend in home building and renovating is going green.

But it's not the color of the carpet or the shade of the walls, it's the money saved from buying the newest energy-efficient products on the market.

While the payback will be a few years in the making, it's an investment for the future.

"We are hearing more and more of that all the time," said Dan DiSalle Jr. of people seeking energy-efficient alternatives. "People are still looking at the school district and if the house has the right number of bedrooms, but if they could have an energy-efficient home, they would like that, too."

DiSalle is vice president of DiSalle Real Estate Co., a vendor scheduled for the 26th Annual House & Home Show.

The Home Builders Association of Greater Toledo will host the show Feb. 22 to 24 at the SeaGate Convention Centre. Owens Corning is the primary sponsor.

More than 150 industry-related experts will showcase products and services. The benefits of energy-efficiency products for the environment and your wallet will be among topics.

HBA Executive Vice President Tony Plath said green energy might help the struggling housing market.

No one seems to be behind “green building” more than the National Association of Home Builders, he said. In a recent survey, 800 registered voters were asked about what would motivate them to either purchase a green home or “green” their existing home, and 64 percent said reduced energy costs would be a big reason. When people save money on utilities, they can afford a higher monthly mortgage, Plath said.

It's easy being green

Most people don't ask about energy-efficient homes, but sales people at Wayne Homes are trained to promote the benefits, according to Randy Surline, sales manager for Wayne Homes in Bowling Green, a vendor scheduled for the show.

Wayne Homes promotes a variety of energy efficiency features when building a home:

- Energy-efficient heating, ventilation and air conditioning.
- Better insulation.
- Foundation wall basement waterproofing and insulation.
- High-performance windows — up to 50 percent of heating and cooling costs are results of heat loss in winter and heat gain in summer.
- Sealing the home — air leakage can bring polluted air, as well as damaging moisture into the home.
- Whirlpool appliance — all dishwashers are required by the federal government to meet minimum standards of efficiency. Wayne's standard dishwasher conserves at least 25 percent more energy than the minimum federal standard.

“There are a lot of different buyers out there and those different buyers will request different information,” Surline said. “The analytical buyer will want to know how much it will save me in total energy cost.”

It's hard to break down savings with cooling and heating, he said, but if a household spent \$2,000 in one year, for example, it would be 30 percent less in a Wayne Home.

Wind it up

Don't expect to see a street lined with windmills quite yet, but small windmills that generate energy for a residential house or business are on the horizon.

“I believe that it is going to boom within the next five to 10 years,” said Tom Denniston, an electrician for Transtar Companies in Toledo, also a vendor scheduled for the house and home show.

Denniston said small windmills aren't ideal for a neighborhood because “you need more space — a couple of acres maybe.” A 40-foot tower may be needed, too, although the windmills are aesthetically pleasing.

“We are testing the waters to see if the product is going to sell around here,”

Denniston said. "We don't have a dealership agreement, but you can get them if someone needs them."

The **Skystream windmills from Southwest Power** are 1.8 kilowatt systems, whereas the humongous ones seen in Bowling Green are megawatts, he said.

How does it work? Denniston tried to explain.

Skystream is a wind generator installed on top of a tower that converts the kinetic energy in the wind into electricity. In a typical residential situation, a home is served simultaneously by the Skystream and a local utility. If the wind speeds are below 8 mph there will be no output from the generator and all of the needed power is purchased from the utility.

As wind speeds increase, the Skystream's output increases and the amount of power purchased from the utility is proportionately decreased. When the Skystream produces more power than the house needs, the meter spins backwards, creating a "credit" that can be used later.

Denniston said customers wanting energy-efficient products are a mix of those seeking cost-savings and those with a desire to help the environment. More people who invest in this are environmentalists, he said. The cost of a windmill is as much as \$10,000 to \$15,000, but that's less than a swimming pool, and people put those in all the time, Denniston said.

That's hot

Geothermal heating and hybrid heating systems are among products offered through Mauder Heating & Air Conditioning.

"People today are a lot more aware of their utility costs, and when building a new home, it's definitely a consideration, said owner Troy Mauder.

Geothermal equipment takes heat out of the ground and pumps it into living spaces. It's the most energy efficient for heating and air conditioning, as well as producing hot water.

"We aren't using natural gas, propane or fuel oil," Mauder said.

The hybrid heating system switches back and forth from electric to a fuel source.

"All you do is set your thermostat at 70 degrees, and by the way we have the controls set up so it will automatically switch back and forth accordingly," Mauder said.

People labeled electrically heated homes as not energy-efficient, but that's not always true, he said. It's good during milder temperatures.

"Once it starts to get really cold outside, it isn't as efficient — the colder it gets outside, the gas system can be more efficient," he said.

The hybrid system's upfront cost is \$800 to \$1,000 more than a conventional system, but after three years a household can save \$150 to \$300 annually.

"We always do our best to promote the environmental help it provides, but the majority of people go this route because it [saves money]," Mauder said.

Not all green

Josh Koperski of Basement Systems of Ohio said his industry is working on a green-friendly wall system, but it won't be at this year's show. Nevertheless, he will promote what he knows best.

"Basement waterproofing increases the value of the home, he said of the more than 30 products available.

"We have a water-guard channel system," Koperski said. "It is a plastic channel system that goes under your basement floor. It will keep the water out of your basement."

Anyone even considering finishing a basement should waterproof because if the drywall gets wet, it could lead to mold, he said. Also, after spending \$30,000 on carpet, lighting and walls, "you would be just sick if something happened."

Basement Systems is just one of several companies without a green agenda, according to HBA executive vice president Plath. Decorating tips and a visit by the Microsoft Across America touring truck, which will showcase the latest in software and hardware technology, are scheduled, too.

"It's not all green," Plath said of the show. "It's new technology. Each year, just about every product is being tweaked and improved, from windows to roofing to better ways of doing things."

Last year, 7,400 people attended the show; this year, it's expected to double, mainly because of the green theme Plath said.

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