

## Expo shows benefits of going 'green'

By WENDY DAHLE - Special to the Herald

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MANATEE — Jeff Kratsch was hoping through an expo promoting environmentally friendly products and services, he could introduce people to “green” ways to save money and at the same time help the environment.

The first annual *GreenHome Wamalama* was held at the Sarasota-Bradenton Convention Center on Saturday.

“We are promoting sustainable living,” said Kratsch, founder of Onelightbulb.org, a Web site that encourages people to save energy by changing one light bulb at a time. “We are trying to educate consumers on the local providers of sustainable, eco-friendly solutions in the interest of buying local.”

Green is the way of the future, said Kratsch, and he called many of the 60 vendors at the expo “innovators.” They are people demonstrating sustainable ways to exist on the planet, he said.

“We are trying to show people that there are industries to drive the green economy,” said Kratsch. “It’s important because they are the solutions to our problems. We’re just trying to do good stuff.”

After becoming unemployed recently, Kratsch was compelled to find ways to save money. He started by changing his light bulbs to more energy efficient light bulbs, which helped him save more than \$100 a month in energy use.

“It felt great,” said Kratsch. “It felt empowering.”

That was just the beginning. After that, Kratsch started Onelightbulb.org, and since has been encouraging others to be more energy efficient. It’s something that has become more popular due to the recession, he said.

“I think people are becoming humble,” he said. “I think people want to save money and save the environment.”

Like many of the vendors at the expo, Kratsch believes the United States will lead the world in “green” technology just like it did with other industries and technologies.

“The United States will drive the green revolution,” he said. “It will sustain our economy for the long term.”

The expo featured everything from solar panels to hybrid vehicles. The University of Florida Extension Service was promoting micro irrigation, Florida friendly yards, container gardening, composting and collecting rain water.

Extension agent Michelle Atkinson spoke to expo attendees about the rain barrel, a 55-gallon barrel that can be hooked up to rain gutters to collect water.

“You can water your plants, wash your car and wash your dog,” she said. “There are all kinds of things you can do with it. It’s free water.”

Waste Pro had the first hybrid garbage truck parked outside the expo hall, and the company was promoting recycling. Waste Pro sales representative Dave Minton thinks a “green” economy starts with recycling.

“The single biggest thing we can have an impact is recycling,” he said.

G.D. Rogers Garden Elementary School was showcasing its plans to become the first certified “green” school in the county. Bradenton Prep School was telling people about their eco club and the club’s fundraising efforts to convert to a green school.

Of all the exhibits, expo attendee Mary Beth Perez was impressed with the bottle made from corn that filters water. It was displayed at the Bradenton Prep School booth.

“You can use them like 90 times,” she said. “That was nice to know.”

For more information about the expo and exhibitors, visit [www.greenhomewamalama.com](http://www.greenhomewamalama.com).