

Expo teaches green living

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MANATEE — What developed into a green business expo started with a Bradenton resident's mission to advise others how to become better consumers of energy.

Jeff Kratsch founded OneLightBulb.org, a non-profit organization, in 2007 to promote sustainability programs for homes, schools, businesses and local governments after seeing an energy savings in his own home.

"I started OneLightBulb on the premise of what are some simple things one person can do to make an impact on this planet," Kratsch said.

On Saturday, Kratsch will promote that idea on a larger scale when he hosts the GreenHome Wamalama Green Business Expo, which will feature about 60 vendors who specialize in green products and services.

"I think one of the most important elements of this is that both consumers and business owners can learn about products, learn about tactics to save energy, save water, see how easy it can be to recycle," said Kratsch, who is also a marketing professional and founder of MarketsBeyond.

And just like the purpose behind OneLightBulb.org, Kratsch said the Green Business Expo is about raising awareness.

"More importantly, we want to raise awareness of all innovative companies that have some sort of sustainable products or solution," Kratsch said.

Godzilla Ink and Toner Exchange is one of those vendors.

The Lakewood Ranch-based company remanufactures and refills ink and toner cartridges for businesses.

"For the most part, we are constantly reducing the amount of waste as well as the cost that businesses spend on mostly color cartridges," said Bill Ebert, president of Godzilla Ink.

The Green Business Expo will be a good venue to network with other business owners and market Godzilla Ink's services and products, Ebert said.

"We're a local company and our competition is major superstores so it's important that we get our name out there and people know that we're around," Ebert said.

Sunbelt Electric and Solar Energy, too, will get to market its products to consumers and business owners. The Sarasota-based company provides solar electric installation and equipment.

Rick Rogers, chief operating officer for Sunbelt Electric and Solar Energy, said solar electric installations' costs range from \$22,000 to \$200,000 depending on the energy savings the consumer wants to achieve and the building.

Rogers said he doesn't anticipate the expo will generate sales as much as it will build awareness of his company's product.

"We find that shows like this are primarily a place to provide education rather than sales," he said.