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Going green at eco-conscious Dorn Homes

By Mike Touzeau

CEOs aren't exactly at the top of the average American's "People I Most Admire" list right now. And even though most folks don't look in a corporate direction for help in saving the environment, David Grounds, president and CEO of Dorn Homes, continues to retain the reputation for doing the right thing.

"Building good quality is green," he likes to say. And certainly after years of trying to be the best from tract to custom homes in these parts, Grounds has earned such awards as Southern Arizona's Custom Builder of the Year four years in a row and Humanitarian of the Year from Green Valley Assistance Services for his charity contributions.

Grounds knows he bumps into his customers every day in the community, so he tries to hold himself to a higher standard.

He feels Dorn Homes has gone a step further in attempting to be one of the first to craft a consistent commitment to create an eco-conscious custom product, whether it's upscale or toward the bottom of the price road.

"We took a house and completely re-engineered it," Grounds said. Energy savings, conservation and a healthier living space are the major goals of his new smart technology building philosophy for Dorn's seven different communities in the area, from the Villages of Rio Rico, many under \$200,000, to million-dollar homes in the Ritz Carlton project near Tucson. Learn more at www.DornHomes.com.

"I started studying how to build a better house a long time ago," Grounds said, recalling his consternation about his own family's rising utilities bills.

"First, we found where most energy is being used," he said as he sketched out typical heat and cold depletion from poor insulation and air circulation, costing up to 70 percent of total energy loss.

Dorn pumps in high-density wet blown cellulose made from recycled newspaper, rather than fiberglass, after using infrared technology to discover where energy is escaping from windows, doors and joints, and installs high-performance low E glass that has a metal oxide film coating that reflects long-wave heat energy.

The company vents HVAC systems in sealed galvanized metal, not wood, to reduce dust and potential exhaust gas from the garage, provides full circulation ventilation so rooms fully ventilate with fresh air from the outside, and better insulates attics to reduce heat transfer to the inside.

Dorn building materials include bamboo floors, energy-saving appliances, programmable thermostats, water-conserving plumbing fixtures, and low VOC (volatile organic compounds) paints and carpets.

"We have taken the insulation and extended it to the roof deck, so the home becomes a sealed thermal envelope," Grounds told a group of Green Valley realtors some time ago about his passion for going green.

"All duct work is mastic sealed and stays within the insulated areas of the home so the heat and air conditioning work more efficiently."

He shared some startling examples with the realtors about how little things can make a difference. For example, adding low E



MIKE TOUZEAU | SPECIAL TO THE GREEN VALLEY NEWS
Dorn Homes CEO Dave Grounds, left, and sales agent Michael Dalton demonstrate the water retention feature on an energy-saving Dorn home.

coatings in the United States would save the equivalent of a half billion barrels of oil per day, one third of what we import from the Persian Gulf. And if every American household replaced four incandescent bulbs with compact florescent bulbs, it would save as much energy as removing seven million cars from the road.

A partner in the National Association of Home Builders Green Building Program, Grounds has met with energy leaders across America.

Dorn is the only builder in Arizona and among only five in the country certified in the EPA "Water Sense" pilot program (one model even has an underground water collecting cistern).

Dorn's Solar Smart homes are rated as high as 70 percent more energy-efficient than homes built five years ago, with the cost of solar features cut by about 80 percent after tax and energy rebates.

Although many of his clients are upscale buyers, Grounds says it doesn't matter what your means are, he's finding everybody wants to conserve.

"Successful people are intelligent," he said, "and they want healthier and more efficient and smart technology for their families. Besides, people are still watching their pocketbooks."

Green Valley resident Mike Touzeau is a freelance writer for the Green Valley News and Sun.



They're Going Green

The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality building, 1110 W. Washington St. in Phoenix, took first place in the "Best State Agency Building" category for the Arizona Capitol Times' "Best of the Capitol" contest.

The ADEQ building is LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver-Certified by the U.S. Green Building Council. ADEQ moved into the building in 2002.

Among its many "green" features: a landscape and exterior designed to reduce the heat-island effect; interior lighting that uses energy-saving dimming fluorescent ballasts that are controlled by photocells and produce no more light than is needed; a 900-panel rooftop solar power grid; construction materials made of recycled, local and regional materials; and a water-efficient landscape.

"All of us here at ADEQ are honored to accept this award," said ADEQ Acting Director Patrick J. Cunningham. "We are proud of this building and the many features that it has to produce a more sustainable environment."

For more information, visit <http://www.azdeq.gov/environ/waste/p2/download/gbbrochure.pdf>

Tips to ECO-LIVING



Here are a few ways to cut down on packaging waste, which makes up a third of all garbage tossed out in this country:

- Cut back on single-serving foods and beverages. Instead, buy items in bulk and portion them out into reusable containers.
- Tone down the take-out. Cooking just one more dinner and packing just one more lunch a week will have a big impact on unnecessary waste and will save you money.
- Buy household items, like detergent and cleaning supplies, in concentrated forms so that you get more product per package.
- Whenever possible, look for packaging made from recycled materials, and always check the plastic code to make sure the package is recyclable. Courtesy of www.thegreenguide.com

Online Links

Check out The Green Catalog at <http://list.netatlantic.com/t/45853665/69058255/112279/0/> for recycled and eco-friendly marketing products for businesses, special events and more. Included are a variety of pens, notebooks, calendars, tote bags and water bottles. Look for lanyards made from recycled beverage bottles, as well as coasters, key tags and jar openers made from recycled tires. Items can feature your company or event name and logo.

My Green Idea!



The Green Valley News and Sun welcomes your eco-ideas. E-mail us at eco-living@gvnews.com to let us know how you're going green.

From Annie Duncan, Tubac

- Close window blinds to block the heat from coming indoors.
- Ride the bus.
- Turn off lights at dawn, and change your automatic timer settings with the seasons.

Easy green tips for everyday life on a budget

If the current economy has you thinking you don't have the time or money to reduce your impact on the environment, think again — you might be surprised to know that living a greener lifestyle can actually put money back in your pocket.

It's a matter of figuring out what works best for you and making simple changes that often require little or no time or investment.

To shave your budget and also do your part for the environment, consider these easy environmentally preferable, money-saving tips.

• Make fewer trips to the grocery store.

Frequent shopping trips add up, and not just in the cost of what you'll spend at the store. Minimize trips to the supermarket by creating a weekly meal plan

and taking note of the ingredients you'll need to pick up.

Take advantage of off-peak shopping hours that offer better in-store sales, use your coupons and stock up on frequently purchased pantry items and dry-goods. And always be sure to re-view the contents of your pantry and freezer before heading to the store — it can save you money and repeat trips.

• Pick up environmentally preferable entertaining supplies.

When entertaining, consider convenient and energy-effective alternatives. The average dishwasher uses six gallons of water per cycle, so when hosting parties, pick up environmentally preferable tableware made with recycled plastic or annually renewable resources like bamboo, sugarcane or corn. You will have fewer dishes

to wash and use less water — and enjoy more time with your guests.

• Reduce your electricity usage.

Shut down your computer when it's not in use to cut down wear and tear on your hard drive and save on energy costs. The Department of Energy recommends shutting off your monitor if you aren't going to use it for more than 20 minutes, and the whole system if you're not going to use it for more than two hours. Doing so can save you an average of \$90 of electricity a year.

• Opt for a paperless billing option.

Save natural resources by opting for online bill-paying options. Going paperless will save trees, save you money spent on stamps and eliminate the energy needed to mail and process billing enve-

lopes.

• Cut back on your water waste.

Take low-flow short showers and try to keep the temperature at a lukewarm setting for the last few minutes while you rinse. The change in temperature will help prepare you for the drop in temperature as you step out of the bath and save on the cost of heating.

Apply that same idea when washing your clothes. Avoiding the hot cycle will save on water heating costs and extend your wardrobe's useful life.

Taking a few minutes to make simple adjustments can lead to more savings for you as well as for the planet. With these tips in mind, you'll be able to do your part on any budget.

Courtesy of ARAContent

Don't forget to check out the ECO-SITE: www.gvnews.com/eco

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