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Local News

Conference illustrates how green business 'makes cents'

by *Amaris Elliott-Engel / The Citizen*
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AUBURN - Andy Harlan can prove that cost avoidance goes hand in hand with green business practices.

Harlan is the industrial programs manager for a Rochester Institute of Technology center dedicated to making manufacturers more competitive. In particular, the Center for Integrated Manufacturing Studies develops new technologies to help manufacturers get more environmentally friendly and more profitable.

"We've all been in industry and we know what it takes to convince upper management (to invest)," Harlan said.

He was one of three panelists at a conference Friday articulating how green business initiatives "make cents."

An estimated 160 attendees from across the upstate New York region attended the conference, "Unifying Economic Development and the Environment," held at the Holiday Inn in Auburn to explore how to team the economy and ecology.

"In a region that is clamoring for economic development, the question is do we take anything we can get or do we rise the level of sustainable development?" said Evan Lowenstein, president of his one-man Rochester Green Village Consulting firm.

As a specific example of that theme, Harlan said the work of CIMS can be universal for other businesses: developing methods that use little or no hazardous material, conserving energy and developing technologies that have more than a life cycle, which reduces the stream of waste being sent to landfills.

Harlan's research has included the development of a technology to maximize the life span of a key component in computer laser scanner printers.

A wiper blade scrapes toner off a printer's imaging drum. CIMS' work led to the development of a machine called a wiper blade analyzer that checks the wiper blades for defects to the micron level and ensures the wiper blades can be reused. This machine has made the wiper blade component reusable up to 10 times, an important step in a \$27 billion toner cartridge industry, Harlan said.

CIMS' patent has been taken up by a Long Island company, Optical Technologies Corp., with the results of reprocessing two million blades and diverting 96 tons of metal and urethane from landfills.

HSBC executive Robert Boyd said his company has been focusing on environmental initiatives on both local and international levels.

A local example of that effort is the development of a new branch in Greece, a Rochester suburb, that complies to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standard, said Boyd, a senior vice president with the HSBC's Rochester West/Metro District,

This 3,500-square-foot building has eight geothermal wells, gets 25 percent of its power from solar panels and the other 75 percent from grid-supplied wind power. It also has bamboo flooring that avoids using hardwood timber that grows more slowly and takes longer to replace.

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Lorna Middelow, a volunteer director for the Rochester Green Business Network, presented 11 case studies of Rochester regional businesses that implemented green methods that saved them money and upped energy and resource efficiency. The case studies collectively saved the businesses \$1.8 million per year.

The business network was formed in March 2003 and has 43 members who promote green buildings, pollution prevention and other environmental efforts.

Middelow asked the panel audience to choose green products and encourage others to do the same.

“That’s really the only way we’re going to change things,” Middelow said. “We need to send a message to the market. We, as consumers, really care about the environment and sustainability.”

The conference co-sponsors, the Finger Lakes Institute at Hobart and William Smith Colleges and the Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance, has organized watershed conferences for 10 years to build coalitions around drinking water, tourism and quality of life, said Betsy Landre, a FL-LOWPA coordinator.

This conference was expanded to include general economic and ecological concerns because of the “very obvious stresses in terms of the economy” and the need to involve economic development and business officials in upstate’s environment, Landre said.

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