

Business owners see benefits of going green

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Being green has become a slogan of the early 21st century as people strive to find ways to conserve energy and save the planet's resources.

by Eric Hagen

Staff writer

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Frank Gustafson, chief executive officer of Renovodata Services, shows a box of crushed up hard drives that will be recycled. This gives customers the peace of mind that somebody will not pull old files out of a disposed hard drive

The MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce hosted 27 vendors at a Working Green Business Expo Nov. 19 at the Schwan's Event Center in Blaine so business owners and individuals could seek more information about how to be green.

There was a variety of information for the public to absorb.

One of the first things guests may have noticed when driving into the Schwan's Event Center parking lot was a truck with a logo of the Renovodata Services business.

What this company does, according to its Chief Executive Officer Frank Gustafson, is destroy old hard drives, CDs and DVDs.

Most of this scrap material is recyclable and the parts that are not are given to Xcel Energy, which incinerates the material to use the steam to produce electricity, Gustafson said.

The company started in June and all employees have a combined 80 years of experience in the IT industry, he said. It mostly works with regulated industries.

"What we bring them is peace of mind," Gustafson said.

Windmills are a common discussion point in the world today, but it can be difficult to find the right windmill because many of them need to tower above trees to catch enough wind and be efficient.

A company called HG Windpower sells windmills that spin horizontally rather than vertically to cut down on the height.

The turbines are much wider than other windmills, but company spokesperson David O'Brien said this allows the windmills to spin at lower wind speeds.

The wider base and larger magnets and coils allow more energy to be generated at lower wind speeds as well, he said.

The company is installing this new type of wind turbine for the first time at a home in Hayfield, Wis. It has second and third customers already lined up with a fourth person on their heels, according to O'Brien.

Solar Midwest, Inc. was selling a technology called Solatube that is basically a vastly improved skylight that can reduce energy bills.

Essentially, this system captures natural light and directs it into rooms even in a basement.

Cartridges Direct Sales Manager Scott Vonderharr was telling customers that his company re-manufactures or re-fills ink cartridges, which benefits the environment because it keeps old cartridges out of the waste stream.

Rise, Inc., which is based in Spring Lake Park, supports people with disabilities find employment and housing.

The organization has a recycling plant and won an award for its partnership with Coon Rapids-based HOM Furniture.

Rise, Inc. recycles the styrofoam from HOM Furniture that was packaged with furniture. Rise also has corporate recycling contracts.

The Minnesota Technical Assistance Program at the University of Minnesota helps clients reduce energy consumption. In 2008, its recommendations saved its customers a total of \$3 million, according to Krysta Larson, intern program and communications manager.

One example was a dye casting facility that will save over \$100,000 a year, Larson said.

Walters Recycling & Refuse, Inc. representatives talked about their recycling measures and were also offering free recycling of electronics.

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