

Green Notes

Planet Bike Turns to Solar for Electric Power

MADISON, WI—Planet Bike started the new year with a new 10-kilowatt solar power system, which is perched atop the company's headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin. On Jan. 3, the 48-panel system began generating electric power, and Planet Bike estimates that it will more than offset the company's energy use. For that reason, Planet Bike plans to sell nearly two-thirds of the sustainable electric power back to the city's power grid. The photovoltaic power array on the roof of Planet Bike is the third largest of its kind in the Madison area and will help Planet Bike reduce its carbon emissions by 15 tons per year. According to Niels Wolter, the solar electric program manager at Focus on Energy, Planet Bike's estimated annual output will be around 12,000 kilowatts per year. As a proponent of the bicycle as a sustainable and carbon-light form of transportation, the company's decision to go solar goes hand in hand with its commitment to creating positive change for people, their communities and the environment. Owner Bob Downs feels that it's important to show other business leaders that conducting business in a sustainable way is not only the right thing to do but also good for business. Planet Bike donates at least 25 percent of annual profits to causes that promote and facilitate the use of bicycles.

Zane's Cycles Breaks Ground on Green Digs

BRANFORD, CT—Like Planet Bike, Zane's Cycles is turning to the sun to power its new building. Chris Zane, founder and president of the bike shop, took the opportunity to lower energy costs and reduce the company's environmental impact by investing heavily in green technology. The building design includes solar panels that will eventually produce 60 percent of the shop's power needs, and a wind generator in the shape of an 8-foot wheel will also generate power for the shop. The new store is expected to open in October.

Light & Motion Takes Green Business Award

MONTEREY, CA—Bicycle light manufacturer Light & Motion recently received the Green Business Award from the Monterey County Board of Supervisors. The award is given to a business that voluntarily incorporates pollution prevention practices; implements waste reduction programs; and installs water conservation and alternative energy solutions in its operation. Each business must undergo a series of rigorous audits by environmental and conservation experts to ensure it meets the stringent criteria. Light & Motion was the first company in Monterey County to receive this award. Eight businesses have won it since, including the Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary and Whole Foods Market. In addition, the Waste Reduction Award Program recently named Light & Motion a winner of its award for the third consecutive year. The company is utilizing buy-back programs for aluminum and recycling paper, plastics and glass, as well as purchasing green-conscious office supplies. Also, employees are offered incentives to use alternate forms of transportation.

Bike Shop, School Team Up to Reduce Driving

MIDDLETOWN, CT—Pedal Power and the University of Connecticut launched a new program this year aimed at reducing the number of cars on the university's Storrs campus while teaching high school students a trade. Pedal Power will donate its used bikes to a local high school where students will refurbish and tune them up, then deliver them to the college campus as part of the Husky Pedal Power Initiative, said Pedal Power co-owner Bill McEnery. That program would provide bike stations around campus to encourage students and faculty to cycle for transportation instead of driving. The Husky Pedal Power Initiative is just starting to come together and officials still need to look at ways to track the bikes, such as implementing a library card type system. McEnery is working to set up the high school workshops this winter with the hope of having the program underway at the university this fall.