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# Go Green Expo draws nearly 10,000 to Los Angeles Convention Center

Environment-conscious crowds look at energy-efficient lightbulbs, biodegradable trash bags, cornstarch cups and electric cars.

By Esmeralda Bermudez  
January 25, 2009

The glass jar and wire contraption promising to increase your car's gas mileage was a hit. So were the solar panels, the hemp bags and the rooftop gardens. And for a couple discreetly taking whiffs in one booth, it was all about the organic aphrodisiac candles.

Nearly 10,000 people went green Saturday during the first Go Green Expo at the Los Angeles Convention Center. In true Angeleno fashion, most arrived in a procession of cars and then circled the parking garage, vying for a space.

Once inside, a bustle of environment-conscious builders, business owners and families took in more than 200 booths displaying the latest trends in a global campaign that has gained momentum in the last few years. This weekend's event, scheduled to end today, is the second green expo held at the center in the last eight months.

There were electric cars, soybean fiber teddy bears, organic bubble gum, cornstarch drinking cups and a vast menu of energy-efficient products from windows to lightbulbs, air purifiers to irrigation systems. At the center of the convention floor, a massive earth dome made of recycled plastic housed a band playing solar- and exercise-powered instruments.

"I've been recycling for 30 years," said Ross Newton of Altadena. "It's nice to look around and see it works."

He and his wife, Patti, were in the market for synthetic grass to patch up their driveway, though everything from tea brewers to biodegradable garbage bags seemed appealing.

Willis Smith may not be able to control beach pollution or traffic gnarls, but in his home he does his part, he said.

Like many people "converted" by loved ones, Smith, 68, began to reduce and reuse after his teenage daughter got on his case.

"I can't bring plastic home from the market, and when I shop, I got to take one of these doggone bags," he said, pointing to a biodegradable sack he grabbed for free at an exhibitor's table.

As some checked out the competition, television producer Brian Girard, 32, and three of his friends spent the morning learning about the green industry and hoping to become involved in a renewable energy business. Some companies have come a long way, Girard said, but the push to go green could use some help.

"Some of the stuff has been around for years," he said. "It can seem hokey or gimmicky."

Organizers of the L.A. County Fair plan to bring the movement to the masses this year as part of their event, said Sara Kirk, a commercial sales specialist with the county.

Kirk spent the day inviting the eco-minded exhibitors to set up booths at the fair.

"A lot of people are receptive," she said. "The fair will be a great way to reach them."

Coordinators of the event saw the expo as a way to challenge Angelenos to take care of Southern California.

"Surfers can't breathe. People can't breathe. There's a lack of mass transit," said Bradford Rand, chief executive and founder of Go Green Expo. "It's tremendous, but all solvable because there's such passion in Los Angeles."

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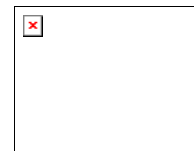
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