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Residence

New Business Alliance Promoting a 'Green' Approach to Building

By Brian Bossetta

There's nothing new under the sun, as the saying goes, and that philosophy is part of the driving force behind a newly formed partnership of business owners dedicated to "greening" the planet—as well as the economy.

The Hamptons Green Alliance, or HGA, the brainchild of one of the premier home builders on the East End, Frank Dalene of Hamptons Luxury Homes, was created last spring to provide information and raise awareness of building and maintenance practices that aim to produce "carbon-neutral, zero-energy" homes while at the same time advancing "green technologies," such as solar and wind power.

The alliance includes experts in trades related to the building industry, Mr. Dalene said, all of whom share the mission of promoting alternatives to fossil-fuels and traditional building practices.

"There's a lot of information out there that is impractical and theoretical," Mr. Dalene said. "We want to break it all down and make it simple so our clients can understand it."

For John Thorsen Jr. of Connected Hearth in East Hampton, that means getting back to basics and using a "little bit of common sense." Mr. Thorsen argues that many of the answers are "right in front of us" and that we fail to see what's obvious, such as the windmill on the village green in Water Mill that was built in 1800 and at one time harnessed the wind to grind wheat and corn. "The last thing we often see is what's in plain sight," he said.

Mr. Thorsen's company provides intelligent controls for homes to save energy by regulating appliances and security systems.

"About half of the large, energy consuming homes on the East End are second homes," Mr. Thorsen said. "Yet their hot water heaters

are running full time. That doesn't make sense and can be easily corrected."

Mr. Dalene and Mr. Thorsen met at an industry function in the fall of 2007 and in the course of sharing their ideas on the environment planted the seed for the alliance.

"We had similar ideas," Mr. Thorsen said. "We decided it just made sense for like minded business owners to get together to work toward energy conservation."

Other HGA founding members include Delfino Insulation Company based in Bohemia with an office in East Hampton, Flanders Heating & Air Conditioning, Sun Stream USA in Southampton, and Treewise, an organic landscaping firm in East Hampton.

The alliance, which meets every two weeks at the Candy Kitchen in Bridgehampton, is growing, Mr. Dalene said. "We're just getting off the ground, we're creating alliances with other businesses," he said. HGA is a not-for-profit organization open to members that relate to the alliance's goal of building a greener future. The idea, Mr. Dalene said, is to assemble a network of professionals that will educate the public in the field of green building and ecological property maintenance.

The East End of Long Island, with its myriad mansions dotting the landscape, is the perfect breeding ground for HGA's initiatives, Mr. Dalene said.

"The great thing about building homes in a luxury market is that you're not limited by budgets," he said. "Sometimes, in the Hamptons, you have an unlimited budget. So that gives us a great opportunity to build these energy efficient homes."

But Mr. Dalene said a homeowner doesn't have to live in a luxury home to make a positive impact and that everyone can start taking action now.

"There's simple things you can do



Harnessing the wind for energy, something the new Hamptons Green Alliance is advocating, is nothing new. BRIAN BOSSETTA

in your house today," he said. "You don't have to do everything at once. You can take one step at a time."

Adding improved insulation, caulking windows, plugging up holes that allow air to blow through, and installing Energy Star appliances are just some of the measures that Mr. Dalene suggests.

"Replacing an old dishwasher can make a huge difference," he said. "Most old dishwashers are very wasteful."

HGA is a pragmatic group, according to Mr. Dalene, and one that supports sound and rational environmental practices. In his view, some in the "green movement" that have framed the environmental argument in the extreme have turned off many average Americans.

"Religion isn't bad, but there are some radicals who make it sound bad. It's the same thing with the environmental movement," he said. "Our goal is to get people to start thinking about what they can do now to begin living a greener life."

Mr. Thorsen said that "going green" is not only healthy for the planet, but for the economy. "There's two shades of green," he said. "Chlorophyll and money." The United States, in Mr. Thorsen's opinion, is lagging behind other countries such as Germany and Japan in "green technolo-

gies," but believes it will eventually surpass them and lead the world in that field.

"This is a great opportunity for economic growth and I believe we will eventually lead. Green technologies are the economic wave of the future," he said. "We can save the planet and the economy."

"The greatest push today is for renewable energy and reducing energy costs," Mr. Dalene said. "And that push is coming from our clients." He said that the majority of his clients "want to do better" and understand the need for energy conservation.

Mr. Dalene agreed with his colleague's assessment of green technologies and said green building practices that promote environmental health are totally compatible with the free market.

"Not only is there a benefit for the environment, there's an economic benefit as well," he said. "Green technologies mean more products built here at home, more job creation in emerging fields, and the more we get off of fossil-fuels the less money we are sending to foreign countries. It's something we absolutely have to do." Mr. Dalene added that even if we find oil from new places it will eventually run out. "It's a limited supply. I don't know when it will run out, but at some point it will."