

Makeover stirs new interest in Sustainable Business Challenge

A MOUNT Maunganui flooring company with an environmental focus is one of the entrants in this year's Environment Bay of Plenty Sustainable Business Challenge.

The company - LFC Flooring - New Zealand - which is based in Newton Street, markets a "floating" floor product that clicks into place and does not need glues, nails, on-site sanding or smelly polyurethane.

Owners Lisa and Nelson Lindsay offer choices for natural flooring materials too, including cork, hardwoods and a lino made from linseed, limestone and natural resins. They even have a special vacuum cleaner to get rid of any dust created during installation. "We try to have as little impact on people and the environment as possible," Lisa says.

Entering the Sustainable Business Challenge, she says, has been rewarding and beneficial. "We weren't sure whether we should participate or not, being a fairly new company - but we have definitely got a lot out of it and the process was easy."

Now in its third year, the event was radically revamped for 2005 to make it easier to enter.

"Many businesses have grown tired of entering awards, so we changed it to make it easy for them to become more sustainable," says organiser Calum Revfem of the Bay of Plenty Sustainable Business Network.

This time around entry was free for members of the network - and there was not even an entry form. It also compares businesses in the same stage of the journey to sustainability.

"The concept is to encourage businesses to take up the advice and feedback from judges and to make sustainable improvements over the following 12 months. The attraction is that any company can enter, no matter where they are on their sustainability journey."

With entries now closed, an awards evening will be held on May 27.



FOR Nelson and Lisa Lindsay, entering the challenge has been "rewarding and beneficial".

Photograph courtesy Sustainable Business Network

Shades of 'Jack and the beanstalk' as council puts on a show

TAKE note of the vines that creep skywards at Mount Maunganui's popular home show in early May.

They lead to a place where "Our Home, Our Environment" is on show - it's Environment Bay of Plenty's fun-filled and information-packed display.

Communications officer Sheree Philips says by following where the vines trail upstairs, visitors will be led on a path that takes them through a space just like their own backyards.

"We've put together a display that tries to re-create the local environment, including a garden, the beach and the sea. It will be fun for people to explore, and there'll be a few surprises too, like practical give-aways."

It's also a good opportunity to ask questions of specialised staff. "You can find out everything from how to get rid of weeds to how to be safe in the water

to what bus to catch to work. You might even want to talk to someone about a special environmental project you've always wanted to do."

For kids there's the chance to join the Pollution Busters Club - lucky children might also get to meet the club's mascot BeeBOP, Sheree says. There will also be games to play, competitions to enter, activities to get involved in, and pictures to colour in!

Sheree says anyone who is interested in making the most of their home and their environment will benefit from taking a walk through the Bay of Plenty's backyard.

The Bay of Plenty Times Home Show is being held at the Mount Action Centre in Triton Avenue from Friday May 6 to Sunday May 8.



ENVIRONMENT Bay of Plenty's Jillian Houghton working on the "Our Home, Our Environment" display for the home show.

Some going cold on power, switching to sunshine for hot water

IN MARCH, Barry Oliver disconnected his hot water tank from its power supply. And, no, he hasn't been shivering under cold showers ever since.

Instead, he's one of the growing number of Eastern Bay residents who are embracing sustainable energy solutions and has had a solar water heating system installed in his home.

Barry says he's been interested in solar water heating for quite a few years, but it wasn't until he took an overseas trip last year and saw how many homes had it that he decided to go down the same track himself.

Well aware of the issues New Zealand was facing with power generation, he contacted the team at Energy Options, which is owned by the Eastern Bay Energy Trust, and says they saw him through the entire project with no fuss.

So now Barry is making the most of Whakatane's high sunshine hours while doing his part to ease the pressure on the country's energy generators.

Charles Wilkie from Energy Options, which installed Barry's system, says the average Eastern Bay home can expect around 70 per cent - or even more depending on the situation - of

their yearly hot water needs to be generated by a modern solar water heating system.

People make the switch to sustainable energy solutions for a number of reasons, Charles says. Increasing electricity prices are the main one.

Another motivating factor is that interest-free loans are available from the government through accredited solar industry designers/installers.

And what about that 30 per cent of the time that the sun might not be shining enough to heat Barry's water? His woodburner has a wetback to heat both his house and his water during winter - so he's confident that his hot-water electricity bill is a thing of the past.

Footnote: Solar water heating is just one way to improve the environmental sustainability of your home. Through proper insulation, energy efficient lighting and looking at your home heating options there's plenty you can do to help our environment. Visit www.energyoptions.org.nz for more information.



Residents roll up to get rid of their hazardous waste

THEY came in their droves. Motorbikes, motor homes and even a mobility scooter brought hazardous waste to the HazMobile when it set up shop in Te Puke, Tauranga and Opoitiki recently.

The mobile hazardous waste service returns to the region for this year's fourth - and final - visit on Saturday 14 May. This time it will be in Whakatane.

The HazMobile is brought to the area by Environment Bay of Plenty and local district and city councils. It collects materials like paint stripper, glues, garden chemicals and cleaners, and batteries.

Environment Bay of Plenty's Paul Futter is pleased with the support for the HazMobile visits. "When these products are stored in people's garages, sheds, and cupboards,

they're accidents just waiting to happen," he explains. "So bringing them to the HazMobile makes it safer for all of us - and for the environment."

Paul says that, while people were advised to transport materials in car boots or the back of trucks, the range of vehicles used for the purpose "showed just how keen everyone was to get rid of these products".

Next stop for the HazMobile

Whakatane
Te Tahi Street
Council Depot
Saturday 14 May
10am to 2pm