

a green

written by EMILY LANDES

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scene



On April 20, 2009, just two days before Earth Day, SFAA hosted its first-ever Green Festival at Fort Mason. That same day, the City of San Francisco broke a temperature record that had held since 1986. The 92-degree measurement blew past the 84-degree record set back when Dianne Feinstein was still mayor. The soaring temperatures outside drilled home the importance of what was going on inside: a fun and educational event dedicated to helping owners lessen their impacts on the planet, and on their wallets.

All around the room were signs that this wasn't just another SFAA membership meeting. Posters reading "Recycle Only" were plastered next to cold bottled waters, and fresh vegetables and wraps adorned tables with festive green napkins and balloons. SFAA associate members hosted tables filled with pamphlets about their green products and services, attracting a healthy crowd interested in learning about the cost-saving and health-conscious aspects of being environmentally aware. Marvel Maids was one of the associate members with a table at the event, and President Steve Collins said he believes today's tenants are up to date on green products and expect their buildings' common areas to be "cleaned with something that's safe for me, my pets and my baby."

Other associate members educated attendees by giving short presentations on what their companies could offer green-minded owners. Many in the audience seemed especially interested in the solar hot water discussion moderated by SunWater's Chris Chappell. After giving a short speech on the benefits of solar hot water (including an average payback of under 10 years, minimal maintenance needs, and federal tax credits and grants), Chappell was inundated with questions from members who wanted to know more, particularly about the price of installing such a system in comparison to solar panels. Chappell assured them that solar hot water is less expensive than solar electricity and that the hot water system takes up less space. He also offered free onsite estimates to any owners interested in installing the systems, which can supply up to 70% of a building's hot water needs throughout the year.

Seventy percent was also a key figure for Sunset Scavenger's Robert Reed. That's the amount of garbage that San Francisco is diverting from the landfill, thanks to the city's various recycling programs. The city's goal is to reach 75% by 2010, and landlords' help is essential in order to get there. Reed said 2,100 apartment buildings already use the green composting bins, but that's only a

fraction of the multifamily buildings in the city. "Everyone is doing some level of recycling," Reed explained. "The city would like apartment buildings to do a little bit more."

The green bins can be added free of charge and are easily incorporated into a building's existing recycling program. Every resident receives a kitchen pail to keep in the unit, as well as a starter set of biodegradable liner bags. After that, they can buy their own liners (available at more than 80 San Francisco retailers), or use milk cartons or paper bags. When the pails get full, the compostable contents can be dumped in the building's green bin. "No fuss, no muss," said Reed. "It's so simple." The food scraps and yard trimmings in those bins (as well as those from 50,000 single-family homes and 2,000 restaurants) totals 105,000 tons each year, which is turned into 20,000 tons of compost for 10,000 acres of Bay Area vineyards and farms.

That may seem like a lot, but it's nothing compared to the amount of paper diverted and recycled each year, thanks in part to Sunset's Shredding and Destructive Services. Shredding and Destruction certainly made the largest contribution to the Green Festival: a huge truck that

A Green Scene ... continued on page 53

