

TUESDAY BIZ

Where Business Lives in Chester County

DAILY LOCAL NEWS

Tuesday, February 23, 2010



Energy Awareness

Practical Energy works with area schools, businesses

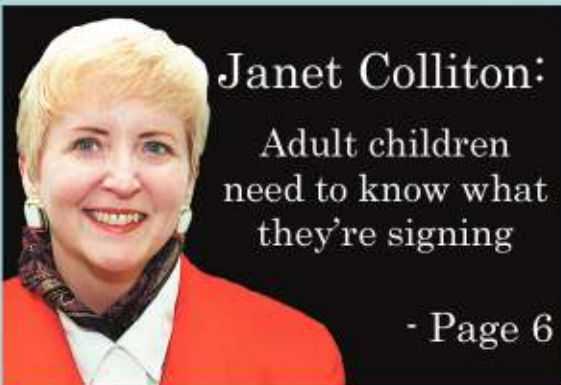
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Celek Sighting

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Janet Colliton:

Adult children need to know what they're signing

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BALDWIN'S FINAL CHAPTER

**Chester County landmark
Book Barn for sale after 64 years**

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Company shows schools, businesses how to save energy

Practical Energy raising awareness

By SARAH E. MORAN
Special to the Local News

The West Chester Area School District saved \$250,000 in energy costs during the past year at its 16 schools, mainly by turning off lights and computers when they weren't being used.

"That's the equivalent of saving more than three teachers' salaries," a weary Kevin Campbell, West Chester public schools facilities and operations director said last week, following two gargantuan snowstorms that left school parking lots looking more like Olympic half-pipes. "The savings were phenomenal."

The school district worked with Practical Energy Solutions, a West Goshen company focusing on energy efficient and conservation services, to raise the energy awareness of students and staff alike, Campbell said. "We were wasting a lot of energy. Simple modifications to our behavior caused us to substantially reduce our electrical usage."

Practical Energy is the brainchild of Paul Spiegel, a civil engineer and Westtown resident who founded the company four years ago after years in the environmental engineering consulting business.

Well-known in regional environmental circles for what some observers call his "visionary greenness," Spiegel teaches construction methods at Temple University when he's not running his company, which has four employees, soon to expand to six.

Spiegel comes naturally to the environmental field. A Boy Scout when he was growing up in Devon and Valley Forge, he would always be sure to leave campsites cleaner and better than he found them. "That's the way I feel about the world," the engaging Spiegel, a graduate of Conestoga High School and the University of Delaware, said. "I want to have a positive impact."

Spiegel and his employees did a comprehensive energy audit and consumption profile for West Chester public schools. "What we wanted from the beginning was to involve staffers and students in the first phase of the savings program," he explained.

"We asked them, 'How do you use energy? How can you save?'"

Results were immediate and impressive. During 2009, the 16 schools cut electrical consumption ranging from 10 to 20 percent, for an average consumption drop of 13.2 percent. The district's electrical bill dropped 9 percent, from \$2.66 million in 2008 to \$2.42 million in 2009.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Administration estimates that 35 percent of electrical consumption in U.S. secondary schools is wasted energy, West Chester school district's Campbell pointed out. "We're at 25 percent waste now and want to cut that to 14 percent," he said.

At B. Reed Henderson High School, the results are telling. Kilowatt-hours dropped 17 percent, or 770,000 kilowatt-hours, from 2008 to 2009, and CO2 emissions, a waste product from burning coal, oil and natural gas to make electricity, fell by almost 1 million pounds.

From 2008 to 2009, the high school shaved its 2009 electrical bill 12 percent, dropping \$59,000 to \$440,000.

Savings came mostly from turning off lights and machines when they weren't being used, mostly via automatic setbacks, some of which included heating and air-conditioning.

Peggy Hartzell-Bennett, a Henderson art teacher, worked with science teacher Dan Lamme and the Henderson Environmental Club to create the school's "Power Down Friday" program.

Said Hartzell-Bennett, "This is the kind of business-community partnership that makes a real difference for everyone - students, teachers, faculty and taxpayers. Students and staff ... can make a big difference through small individual actions."

Spiegel and his team also worked with school custodians, who were in the habit of turning on lights from one end of the school to the other while they cleaned at night. "Now, they turn on only those lights where they're working," Spiegel noted.

Teachers and other Henderson employees were urged to

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Staff photo by Larry McDevitt

Henderson High School Environmental Club members Veronica Reynolds, left, and Liz Rotiroti, second from left, talk with Paul Spiegel of Practical Energy Solutions, third from left, and club member Mike Gardo, right, around a small solar panel at the school.

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Two surprise sectors leading the recovery

INSIDE THE NUMBERS

INDICATOR: January Industrial Production

KEY DATA: IP: up 0.9 percent; Manufacturing: up 1.0 percent

IN A NUTSHELL: "A broad-based recovery in manufacturing has set in, pointing to continued growth ahead."

WHAT IT MEANS: And the weakest shall lead the way. I suspect that is not the real phrase but when it comes to the current economic recovery, that is indeed the case.

Both manufacturing and housing are now the central components of the upturn instead of being the basket cases that restrained growth.

Manufacturing output soared in January and while the gains over the past seven months have not been consistent, in total they have been pretty significant. Since June, we are looking at a greater than 5 percent rise.

That's pretty impressive. Importantly, the increases are now spread across almost the entire sector. Of the 11 durable goods industries, only furniture was down. Only two of the eight nondurable goods industries posted declines in January.



NAROFF

Over the year, manufacturing production is now up over 2 percent. That may not sound great but given how much it had fallen, that is pretty remarkable.

Technology is soaring, motor vehicle output is improving, consumer goods are being mass produced and business equipment and supplies are now coming off the lines.

As a consequence, firms are beginning to use up some of the massive amounts of excess capacity they have, though there is still a lot of unused machinery and equipment.

MARKETS AND FED POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

What is impressive about this report is the extensive nature of the rise in production. Just about the entire manufacturing sector is taking part in the expansion.

We seem to be reaching the point where the recovery may be self-sustaining. And that raises questions about additional fiscal and monetary stimulus.

While politicians need to feed the screaming electorate who are demanding jobs, there really is not a whole lot more that can be done. There is still plenty of money in the stimulus pipeline and it should be enough to keep growth up during the first six to nine months of the year.

Similarly, there are real questions whether the amount of monetary stimulus is still needed. The Fed doesn't want to take the punch bowl away too soon but clearly the time where it must be drained is coming. My expectation is that we will see clear action, in whatever form it

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Staff photo by Amy Drago

From left, Dianne Herrin, Justin Murray, Paul Spiegel and Jeffery Byrne work in the offices of Practical Energy Solutions.

Energy

(From Page 4)

turn off lights when they left their classrooms and offices, and occupancy sensors were installed in faculty, conference and rest rooms - places where no one person is responsible for lights being turned on and off.

The next step is to examine systems in all buildings - heating and air conditioning, lighting and electricity, for starters, the West Chester school district's Campbell said - and figure out where installing green technologies makes the most sense.

At Henderson, a \$15,000 grant from the Earth Day Network will be used to install solar panels atop the building.

"Keeping up awareness of energy savings is crucial," Campbell said. "It's easy to become apathetic about this, and return to old behaviors."

Practical Energy also evaluated Westtown School's energy consumption for nine months, and rolled out an energy consumption awareness program there. The result? A 15 percent savings that reduced the school's annual

electricity bill from \$350,000 to \$300,000.

Westtown School presented its own challenges, largely because many of its buildings are historic and old - energy hogs, in other words.

And, after Practical Energy did a rate analysis, West Chester Borough Hall began buying electricity from a third-party supplier and slimmed down electricity bills by 31 percent.

The company doesn't do residential audits because, in part, "how people use energy in a bigger building has a much greater impact on energy consumption than what people do at home," said Practical Energy program manager Dianne Herrin

The company's clients are concentrated among businesses, schools, municipalities and manufacturing facilities. Most of its work is regional because, as Spiegel put it, "This is a hands-on business."

"The great thing about getting people to change their behaviors is that there's an educational aspect to the whole effort," Herrin said. "People start to realize how much energy they use (unnecessarily) and it has a ripple effect."

To contact correspondent Sarah E. Moran, send an e-mail to semoran219@msn.com.

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